A TOUCH OF WILDERNESS

Oral Histories on the Formation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

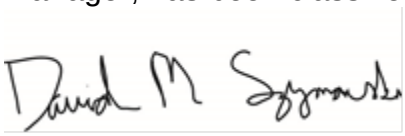
by

Leonard Pitt, Ph.D.
Professor of History Emeritus
California State University, Northridge

Los Angeles, California
April 2015

Report Certification

I certify that *A Touch of Wilderness: Oral Histories on the Formation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* has been reviewed against the criteria contained in 43 CFR 7.18(a)(1) and upon the recommendation of Phil Holmes, Cultural Anthropologist, and Gary Brown, Cultural Resource Program Manager, has been classified as Available.



_____
David Szymanski, Superintendent
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

_April 23, 2015_____
Date

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National Park Service, Pacific West Region

Los Angeles, California
April 2015

Dedication

To the Memory of Susan Nelson (1927-2003),

"*Mother of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area*"

The support necessary to complete and prepare
this document for final publication,
was provided by the Santa Monica Mountains Fund,
thanks to the generosity of
Sara Nelson Horner.

In Appreciation

Dale Lash Pitt

1931 - 2008

The National Park Service and
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
appreciate and acknowledge Ms. Pitt's contribution
of transcribing the oral history interviews for
"A Touch of Wilderness:
Oral Histories on the Formation of the
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area."

". . . we have this great system of national parks, monuments, and other areas . . . because a few farsighted, unselfish, and idealistic men and women foresaw the national need and got the areas established and protected in one way or another, fighting public inertia and selfish commercial interests at every step."

---John Ise, Our National Park Policy: A Critical History (1961), 196

Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume contains the reminiscences of 14 public officials who helped create the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) in 1978.

In the decade of the 1970s, land developers were aggressively developing open land in the Santa Monica Mountains, an area of great natural beauty, and cultural and scientific importance. Residents of the West Side of Los Angeles who opposed the developers found that local regulations controlling land development were weak and that funds to purchase and preserve land were difficult to come by. They eventually looked to Washington for assistance.

In the nation's capital several proposals were floated on how best to preserve the Santa Monica Mountains. After an intensive study the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, a branch of the Interior Department, recommended that the federal government should designate a national area for preservation that would then be administered by state and local officials. This was the so-called "greenline" proposal. Simultaneously, members of the House and Senate introduced legislation to create a national park or recreation area to be administered by the National Park Service (NPS). The final product was the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-625), also known as the "Omnibus Park Bill," or, more slyly, as the "Omnibus Pork Bill." The true author of the Omnibus Park Bill was the late Phillip Burton (D-San Francisco), a larger-than-life congressman considered by some seasoned observers to be a political genius. Burton chaired the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in the Ninety-Fifth Congress. The section of the bill relating to the Santa Monicas was authored by Congressman Anthony Beilenson, a Democrat who represented much of the affected area. The Senate approved the House bill and it was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on November 10, 1978.

The law created a 150,000-acre preserve that sprawled from Franklin Canyon above Beverly Hills to Point Mugu in Ventura County. It gave to the Secretary of the Interior the responsibility of managing the recreation area--to protect the scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, archaeological, historic, and public health aspects of the Santa Monicas, as well as its unique Mediterranean chaparral ecosystem. Congress set a ceiling of $125 million for land purchases over a five year period. The law placed the recreation area under the stewardship of the National Park Service. The Santa Monicas were a far cry from the "Big Sky" parks such as Yosemite or Grand Canyon that the NPS

normally oversees. The SMMNRA was situated within a teeming metropolitan region, it encompassed many private land holdings, and the law mandated a federal partnership with state, county and local government jurisdictions. This combination made it almost unique among National Park holdings.

A few disclaimers are in order. The following interviews cover only the period of the park's gestation and birth rather than its entire quarter-century history. In fact, most of the conversations conclude when the National Park Service first took charge and became established as steward of the parkland in the Santa Monicas. Also, these oral interviews do not constitute a finished work of history but are the raw documents from which history can later be written. And finally, the informants do not include all of the people who made major contributions, and do not include any of the opponents of the park as constituted.

These are primary records that contain the personal perspectives of key individuals who, while working on the federal, state, or local levels, were intimately associated with the origins of the recreation area. The informants include two key former congressional representatives, namely **Anthony C. Beilenson,** who eventually came to be recognized as the father of the Santa Monica National Recreation Area; and his friend and colleague, **Robert J. Lagomarsino,** a Republican from Ventura, who became known as the father of the companion preserve, Channel Islands National Park.

The group also includes four former congressional aides who labored in the trenches on Capitol Hill in 1978. Working the office of Congressman Phil Burton were **Dale Crane**, a resource specialist and environmental planner formerly with the Army Corps of Engineers, and **Cleve Pinnix,** an NPS legislative aide assigned to Burton's office. **Gail Osherenko** was a young attorney who served as legislative assistant to Beilenson and drafted and redrafted sections of the bill that Beilenson negotiated with his congressional colleagues. **Linda Friedman** was Beilenson's field worker and had the responsibility for dealing with local individuals and organizations in his Los Angeles office.

Ray Murray worked for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and was the chief architect of the "greenline park" proposal. **Robert Chandler** was the first park superintendent of the SMMNRA; and **John Reynolds** was one of his planners. Also included among the informants is **Arthur E. Eck,** an NPS legislative affairs specialist in the 1970s when he worked with Congressman Burton who reappeared as a principal in 1995 when he was appointed superintendent of the SMMNRA

The perspectives of public officials from the state of California are also represented in these interviews. **Huey Johnson** was secretary of the California Resources Agency under Gov. Jerry Brown. **Russell W. Cahill** served as Brown's director of State Parks and Recreation from 1977 to 1980. Yet another state official, **Joseph T. Edmiston,** headed the planning agency established by the California Legislature to purchase land in cooperation with the NPS and the state parks. He eventually became director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a position he still holds.

Several municipalities within the recreation zone also had a stake in the park's emergence. One of them, the city of Los Angeles, was represented by **Anton Calleia,** Mayor Tom Bradley's deputy on the board of the Santa Monica Conservancy.

Again, many people not included in this collection made key contributions in the formative years of the NRA. Chief among them is Susan Nelson of the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation, who was responsible for much of the grassroots lobbying for parkland among environmentalists and homeowners in the 1960s and 1970s.

Nelson obtained public funds for this oral history project and recruited me to conduct the interviews. I began researching in 1997 and did the taping sessions in 1998 and 1999. Much of the background data came from the files in Congressman Beilenson's field office in Woodland Hills and in Special Collections at UCLA's Charles Young Research Library.

In preparing the transcriptions, I attempted to follow the cannons of Willa K. Baum of the Oral History Project at the University of California, Berkeley, which are described in her *Transcribing and Editing Oral History* (1985). For the most part the words are printed verbatim, as spoken by myself and the narrators, although glaring ambiguities, false starts, and misleading stray words have been eliminated. No attempt was made to reorganize the narrations in chronological or topical order, although in rare instances words or sequences have been altered slightly for the sake of clarity.

Prior to the interviews some narrators received a chronology similar to the one that appears in the Appendix. Afterward, each was sent a verbatim version of the transcript for review and clarification of spellings and words lost in conversation. Sometimes they added additional clarifying comments, which are incorporated into this version. The verbatim documents, with the narrators written marginal comments, are available for inspection through the Park Service. Should any conflict arise between what is printed here and what is heard on the tape, the tape should be regarded as the final word. Ellipses in the text indicate interruptions. Brackets indicate insertions of words added for clarity or elaboration.

I would like to acknowledge additional valuable assistance. All of the interviewees proved exceptionally informative, articulate, and patient. In addition, my wife, Dale Pitt, typed all of the transcriptions, did much of the editing and indexing, and examined every page for typographical errors. I also received help from Nancy Andrews, Jean Bray, and Philip Holmes of the National Park Service; Susan Little, field representative for Congressmen Beilenson and Brad Sherman; Lynne Singer of the Santa Monica Mountains Foundation; Pauline Grenbeaux and Joseph Engbeck of California Parks and Recreation; and Dale Treleven of the UCLA Oral History Project. To all of them I offer my thanks, and absolve them of any inaccuracies that may remain in the transcriptions.

These interviews are the property of the National Park Service. They are available at both the National Recreation Area headquarters and at the Urban Archives Center in Oviatt Library on the campus of California State University, Northridge. Requests for permission to quote from the transcriptions should be directed to the Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

This project has been an invaluable learning experience for me. Much of what I learned about the history of the Santa Monicas—including grassroots politics, land management, and the workings of various branches of government--was completely new to me. In this era when government workers are commonly held in low esteem, it was enlightening to find a group of public servants who harbored a bold vision on behalf of the commonweal and who had the skill and determination to bring it to fruition. We owe them a deep debt of gratitude for preserving much of the Santa Monica Mountains as a living legacy for us and our children, and for all future generations.

---L.P.
Los Angeles, April 2003

Afterword:

Susan Nelson died tragically and unexpectedly after being struck by a car near her home on 4 May 2003. She did read these interviews and was hoping to use them in writing her own personal reminiscences. Sadly that project never came to pass, although her extensive personal papers are safely on deposit at the Urban Archives Center at Cal State Northridge, and are available to researchers. Moreover, her basic legacy is clear enough. In the words of her friend, former Congressman Tony Beilenson, who introduced the legislation establishing the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, “she was very much the single greatest private force behind our working to create the park.” She will be greatly missed.

And Another Word:

Long after Professor Leonard Pitt submitted his draft manuscript to the National Park Service, the last of many details essential to producing this version of *A Touch of Wilderness* was finally completed with the aid of funding provided by a generous donation by Sara Nelson Horner which made it possible to conduct final editing of the manuscript, draft the two overview maps on the following pages, produce final hardcopy and electronic documents, and duplicate both types of document for dissemination and archiving. Peer reviews were conducted by Dr. Lu Ann Jones, National Park Service Historian, Washington, D.C., and Dr. Ronald A. Davidson at California State University, Northridge. Final editing was performed by Ruth Kilday, Kristyn Affeldt, and Gary Brown. Computer drafting of the maps was done by Aaron Davis.

---Gary M. Brown
Thousand Oaks, April 2015


Los Angeles Ave (CA-118)
Ronald Reagan Fwy (CA-118)
Simi Valley
Chatsworth
San Fernando
Foothill Fwy (I-210)
Thousand Oaks
(CA-23)
Ventura County
Los Angeles County
Golden State Fwy (I-5)
Ventura Fwy (US-101)
Camarillo
NPS Headquarters/
Former Visitor Center
Cheeseboro/
Palo Comado Canyons
Kanan Dume Rd
Westlake Blvd
Ahmanson
Ranch
Topanga Canyon Blvd (27)
San Diego Fwy (I-405)
Hollywood Fwy (CA-170)
Reseda
North
Hollywood
Ventura Fwy (US-101)
Las Virgenes Rd
Rancho Sierra Vista
& Satwiwa
Danielson Ranch
Paramount
Ranch
Beverly
Park Estates
Wilacre
Park
Runyon
Canyon
Park
Mulholland Hwy
Soka
University
King Gillette Ranch/
Interagency Visitor
Center
Rocky
Oaks
Point Mugu
State Park
Circle X
Ranch
Peter Strauss
Ranch
Malibu Creek
State Park
Diamond X
Ranch
Topanga
State Park
Franklin
Canyon
Fryman
Canyon
Sunset Blvd
20th Century
Ranch
Topanga Canyon Blvd
Pacific Coast Hwy (CA-1)
Zuma/
Trancas
Santa Monica Blvd (CA-2)
West
Hollywood
Leo Carrillo
State Beach
Solstice
Pacific Coast Hwy (CA-1)
Malibu
Santa Monica Fwy (I-10)
Santa Monica
Lincoln Blvd
Pacific Ocean
Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area:
Major Roads, Cities, & Parklands
0 3 6 12 Miles
N
W E
S
Scale: 1:180,000
National Park Service
State Park
Backbone Trail
Los
Angeles
Ventura
San
Diego
Location of the
Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area
(SMMNRA)
A. Davis


Simi Valley
Simi Hills
San Fernando Valley
Oxnard Plain
Santa Monica Mountains
Los Angeles Basin
Pacific Ocean
Conejo Creek
Conejo Mtn
Conejo Valley
Arroyo Conejo
Palo Comado Canyon
Cheesebobo Canyon
Los Angeles River
Callegues Creek
Lake Sherwood
Big Sycamore Canyon
Boney Mtn
Mugu Lagoon
Willacre Canyon
Mission Canyon
Runyon Canyon
Mandeville Canyon
Franklin Canyon
Fryman Canyon
Cahuenga Pass
Rustic Canyon
Sullivan Canyon
Santa Monica Canyon
Topanga Canyon
Malibu Creek
Malibu Lagoon
Trancas Canyon
Zuma Canyon
Ramirez Canyon
Solstice Canyon
Point Dume
Temescal Canyon
Santa Monica Bay
Baldwin Hills
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area: Natural Landscape
0 3 6 12 Miles
N W E S
Scale: 1:180,000
Location of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA)
Ventura
Los Angeles
San Diego
A. Davis

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— I —

FATHERING A NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

An Interview with Anthony C. Beilenson

Anthony C. Beilenson is considered the father of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. He had represented much of the area in the state Legislature and, beginning in 1997, in the House of Representatives, where he was the park's principal proponent and advocate until he retired in 1996. He was interviewed by phone on March 29, 1998 at his home in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Interviewee: Anthony C. Beilenson
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape 1, Side A

PITT: Tony, before we get into your career relative to the Santa Monica Mountains, would you please give us some personal background—very briefly—where you were born, where you were educated, and what you did before you entered politics?

BEILENSON: I'd be happy to. I was born back East, in New Rochelle, New York, immigrated two years later to Mt. Vernon, New York, where I grew up, and spent all of my life, until 1957, when I was graduated from Harvard Law School after having gone to Harvard College. In the early summer of 1957 I came out west to California, practiced law on and off for about four years in the Los Angeles and Beverly Hills areas, and in early 1962 started running for the state Assembly. I was elected in November 1962, and spent four years in the assembly. Subsequent to that, I spent 10 years in the state Senate, and was elected successfully to the United States Congress in November of 1976, where I later served for 20 years.

PITT: Good. Would you mind saying, equally briefly, what you have been doing since you left Congress in 1996?

BEILENSON: That's easier to say because I've been totally retired in the past year-and-a-quarter or so. I'm involved in a lot of personal and family affairs and matters; with my wife taking courses down at the Smithsonian; serving on three or four non-profit, non-paying boards of national organizations; and most recently was appointed by Richard Gephardt, the House minority leader, to serve on a commission dealing with problems of combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That's the only public policy involvement I'm into at the moment. Otherwise, I'm a completely retired human being.

PITT: Thank you. I would like you to tell your own story about your work regarding the Santa Monica Mountains from beginning to end, from '62 to '97, without my interrupting you. Take your time; go as fast or as slow as you wish. Tell as much as you can think of, not to worry, as I say, about all the details or getting out of chronological order. We can always fill in the names and the dates [later]. As far as I am concerned you can take 10, 15, or 20 minutes if you are still talking.

BEILENSON: I appreciate that, Len. But as we've discussed before, I'm not at all sure that I could go on even for the shorter amount of time. I wouldn't mind in the slightest if you'd—if it's convenient for you, if it's something you want to do, for you to intervene now and then, and either ask leading questions, or ask specific questions about things. It doesn't bother me. I don't have an awful lot to say just off the top of my head.

PITT: Fine. I've got lots of questions, and will probe you as we go along.

BEILENSON: One other thing may be of some minor interest, and that is—in terms of biography or former interests—for whatever reason, fairly early on in life, I'm someone who spent a lot of time outdoors, and has enjoyed hiking. In the '60s and especially in the early '70s, when we were in Sacramento, lived in Sacramento full time with our three children, we'd go off at least once a year, sometimes more often, and visit many of the great national parks throughout the country, especially the West, but also back East—Acadia and some of the other places. So I have been someone who has had an interest in parks and outdoor recreation, and I'm sure that's something which led me to be particularly receptive to the idea of being of whatever help I could with respect to aiding this particular national recreation area.

When I was in the state Legislature I served on the finance committee, and health and welfare committee, and business and professions committee, and judiciary committee primarily. I never served on the natural resources committee. But even during that time, ideas or areas such as these were of interest to me. I was the author—if this is at all relevant, and perhaps it might set the tone—for example, in 1970, of the State Endangered Species Act, which was based on something called the Mason Act, which had been passed earlier that same year by the New York State Legislature. So we were the second state to have an endangered species law because of my concern for the way that human beings were mistreating some of the other creatures with whom we found ourselves living on this planet.

And more specifically and important, perhaps, I was the author of a bill—I'm not sure of the year of its passage and signing into law—but I think it was around 1974 or 1975—a bill which sought to, and in fact did, redefine the various areas or segments of the California State Park System. [It was] specifically for the purpose of preventing, what I recall, I think was the then state resources director, William Penn Mott [Jr.], from following through on a plan that he and the then Governor Reagan's administration had, of making some very large, and we thought, inappropriate changes specifically with respect to facilities in Point Mugu State Park. As I recall, they were proposing to build a several-storied parking structure, a several-storied hotel, and some other, as I said, what many of us thought to be inappropriate facilities in a state park area. And we therefore succeeded in passing a bill, of which I was the author, which redefined what could be included in a state park, specifically prohibiting the kinds of structures that the administration was then contemplating. That's a little bit of background in terms of some of my own interests in outdoors things and in recreation.

With respect to what turned out to be the Santa Monica National Recreation Area, let me say at the outset that I enjoyed seeing that list that you sent me, a compendium of the perhaps 15 or 20 years of the efforts on the part of a lot of local people in our area of

Los Angeles especially, to establish such a park in one form or another, whether it would be an NRA or something different, something more grandiose, or something less grandiose. Nonetheless, as you well know, a lot of people were previously involved in it for a good many years. There was this ongoing effort to save for posterity as much of the mountains and seacoast beach area as was possible. I found it to be of great interest, because a good many of the things which were mentioned in the chronology were not known to me before receiving this list. [It] reminded me of the fact that even though I was a member of the state Legislature for 14 years prior to moving on to Washington in January of 1977, and even though I was somebody who naturally was inclined to be of help and would like to have been of help with respect to natural resource issues such as this—the creation of parks and so on—I don't recall at all and was interested to be reminded—not to be reminded but to be told for the first time in receiving this compendium from you—of all the things that had been going on in the years that I was in Sacramento as a state legislator, regarding the area of the Santa Monica Mountains, and not recalling my personal involvement in these efforts in the slightest.

I guess at the time we had the same three state parks that we currently have in the general area of the Santa Monicas, and to a modest extent I was helpful up in Sacramento in acquiring some additional properties to be appended to those existing state parks. But whatever efforts were being undertaken at that time by people back home in Los Angeles to establish a federal presence in the Santa Monicas was something that I was not involved with, or only very barely aware of [while I was in Sacramento].

Former Congressman Alphonzo Bell was involved in some of these areas, and Senator John Tunney was involved in some of these efforts. My predecessor, Congressman Tom Rees, was involved. Many of the same men and women—mainly women, I guess it's fair to say—who were involved on the ground and were involved with me starting in 1977-1978, had been working with my predecessors in Congress, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, for a good many years prior to my arrival on the scene. It's redundant, but I must confess that I was not involved in, and was almost totally unaware of, these efforts directed toward the federal government during my good many years in the state Legislature. It may well have been perfectly natural to have been that way, since it was not my help that was needed; it was the help of representatives in the federal government. But I find it of some interest that I was largely oblivious to, and not included at all, to the best of my recollection, in any of those earlier efforts.

Anyway, I got myself elected, as you know, in November of 1976 and went off to Washington in January of 1977. And right from the beginning (although I don't recall with any great specificity whether it was just prior or just subsequent to my election, or during 1976 while I was running for office) while it's decidedly immodest of me to say so, I think it was fairly clear that I would succeed in winning the seat. It was a Democratic seat and, though I had four opponents in the primary in June of that year, it was fairly clear, I think, to most people who were interested in politics, that I would end up winning the seat. I don't recall exactly when some of these folks came to me to broach the subject of my helping out with ongoing efforts to establish a federal presence in the Santa Monicas. But sometime in or about mid- or late-1976 or early 1977, just subsequent to my election, I did become involved with some of these people on the ground, in Los Angeles, who approached me and asked if I'd be interested in pursuing this matter of establishing a national presence in the Santa Monicas.

It's difficult to a certain extent to remember exactly how it started or who was first involved, only because over the past 20 years and more that I was in the Congress, I spent a lot of time and spoke on enormous numbers of occasions, both in person and over the phone, and from Washington as well as often in Los Angeles, with many of these same people. And I'm not exactly clear any more as to who first came to me, and who I was most impressed with at the beginning—with one exception.

I thought it would be useful to mention the one person I have always myself associated with the Santa Monicas and with being most involved in succeeding and in getting me to become involved although frankly it wasn't difficult at all. I was delighted, first of all, to have something to do when I first went back there. And, second, it was something that appealed to me immediately. And I was delighted to be of whatever help I possibly could—no one had to sell me on the idea. But I do recall from the very beginning it was Susan Nelson who was the person whom I personally, in my own mind and heart, most identified with efforts to create this park, and the person with whom I always was in closest touch, and whom I most trusted, with respect to her instincts with respect to this problem. Along with some of the others, of course.

They, along with Sue Nelson, had been involved with the subject for a good many years and had an awful lot of background in the area which those of us who came along at a later date didn't have. To a certain extent later on that didn't make an awful lot of difference. I mean, we were starting anew as it were. But, again, just to reiterate, it was Sue Nelson whom I remember as having spoken to me about it, and whoever since has been the person back home in Los Angeles, at least, to whom I felt closest and upon whom I relied the most, and from whom I continue to believe that I, and others, have received the most sensible and responsible judgments—you know, with some aberrations now and again, when she gets excited or angry at people, the same as others do. You know her strengths and shortcomings—we all have them. But, generally speaking, she has been the person upon whom I have relied most heavily and whom I trust the most, and continue to do so these days.

Going back again to 1977-78, as everyone connected with this project knows very well, the timing was fortuitous. I don't want to not claim any credit that might be due me because of my efforts. And I was, as I said, more than happy to be involved in this from the very beginning. It was something which appealed to me immediately and something which I believed in deeply and something which I enjoyed very much working [on] back in Washington in my first term there. But as I started to say, the timing was fortuitous because it was in that same first term of mine in Washington that my then colleague, the late Phil [Phillip] Burton, who I think was chairman of the [House Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs] Interior Committee of the House of Representatives, was engaged in his great, and finally successful effort, to pass a major parks bill in the '77-'78 session of the 95th Congress.

And so we had, of course, a very real opportunity of having our park once it had been decided upon to be included in the Omnibus Parks Bill. It surely would have been a far more difficult—perhaps impossible—matter for me as a brand new member of the Congress to succeed in creating this particular park in my first term back there if we didn't have this major vehicle of Phil Burton's to latch on to. And it's also true, I suppose, from the stuff you sent me just a few days ago—I think I recall correctly—that at least at the outset, the otherwise very friendly Carter administration was not supportive

of efforts at the outset to create a federal park in the Santa Monicas. And the fact, of course, that eventually we became just part of a large omnibus bill, which there was no way they were going to veto or not accept. Clearly, it helped clear the way for our success in such a short amount of time. The fact of the matter was, however, that after a good many years of frustration on the part of all of those who had previously been involved in trying to create some federal presence in the Santa Monicas, I was lucky to arrive on the scene and had some very vast amounts of help, especially from Phil Burton and from a friendly presidential administration in my first term there. We were successful by the end of the 95th Congress, to have created the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

We can pause here in another moment or two. I was going to say it was amusing to me, but that's not the right word—it was a little bit ironic that, in a sense, at the time we thought we had accomplished something wonderfully big and good, and of course we had. We had authorized the spending of $155 million in direct federal funding and an additional $30 million for grants for the state to acquire additional property there**.** Being an inexperienced new member of the Congress, I could be perhaps forgiven for thinking that the work was over and done with. But, of course, as you well know, and as all of us have learned since, it was a good deal easier and quicker establishing the park—difficult as that was during those first two years—than it has been since, in terms of acquiring the appropriations to acquire the land to flesh out the park and to make it real. That of course has become a very difficult, frustrating effort and one which stayed with me all my remaining years in the Congress.

A good deal of my time during those subsequent 18 years were spent each year urging and begging my colleagues on the Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations to give us some money with which to acquire some lands for our park out in the Santa Monicas. Especially during the Reagan years but at other times as well, it became an especially difficult and frustrating effort. That's what comes to mind at first.

PITT: Okay. I'll let you take a breather. That was an excellent way to begin. You certainly put into perspective the people and the forces—Susan Nelson, Phil Burton, the White House. Was Sid Yates also important, and were there others in the Congress who were important in that original moment?

BEILENSON: You know I don't recall. It's a perfectly legitimate question. Although Sid Yates became my principal ally and our principal friend by far, certainly in recent years—the past decade or decade-and-a-half. He was chairman for many of those years of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee and therefore the chief person responsible each year for whatever appropriations we were to get. I don't recall his having been involved in any real way—or I may be being unfair to him—back at the time of creation. It didn't involve his direct involvement with our particular Santa Monica efforts. I can only imagine that he must have been involved with Phil Burton on the overall bill, just the authorization bill to create these parks. I don't recall, frankly, since it was so long ago. I suppose it's likely that he was not then the Appropriations Subcommittee chairman, though I may be wrong. Perhaps he had been all those years.

I remember Sid Yates was a close, close good friend of mine, as I said, over the past 12 or 15 years, especially as being the person who's been responsible for getting us

whatever money we could get. And quite frankly, partially, I can claim some credit here. It was because of his friendship with me and our fondness and admiration and respect for one another—especially his for me (but I, of course, felt the same way toward him), that we were able to be as successful as we have been in terms of getting whatever moneys we got over the past 12 or 15 years. But I do not recall his having been involved substantively at the time the park was created. I simply don't know. Basically I was dealing with Phil Burton to a large extent. Phil was carrying the big bill. The Omnibus Bill.

A couple of other people we were involved with, as you know, were other members of the House of Representatives from our area, most specifically Barry Goldwater, Jr., who at that time represented much of the area of the eastern mountains, and also Bob [Robert J.] Lagomarsino. Both were Republicans. Bob was from Ventura County and thereabouts, Santa Barbara, and maybe all of Ventura County. [Bob] also served on the Interior Committee with Phil Burton. So Phil wanted to keep him as content as possible, and also because Bob Lagomarsino had an interest of his own in creating the Channel Islands National Park, or Recreation Area, or whatever it was going to turn out to be, along the coast. So my dealings were with those two men, especially, and of course, with Phil Burton. I do not recall off hand working with other members of the House. I was an awfully new person and it was mainly my own California delegation that I dealt with.

PITT: Going back for a moment to the Sacramento days. Didn't you team up with Alan Sieroty in the Assembly regarding the Point Mugu Park? And you also worked with Howard [L.] Berman I believe. Is this correct?

BEILENSON: I was in the state Senate; they were in the Assembly. Alan took my Assembly seat when I went to the state Senate. About two years later Howard Berman came along and defeated Charlie Conrad in the [San Fernando] Valley, who at that time was the Republican incumbent in the old 57th Assembly District. I am frank to tell you that I do not recall who it was we worked with on the state park matter. At the time I was in a position of some responsibility and authority in the state Senate. During the last two years there, I was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. So we were pretty successful with a lot of efforts in those years.

With respect to Howard Berman's successful efforts to set up the Santa Monica Conservancy, that too, I believe it's fair to say, was something he did basically on his own. He had some tangential help, but it was basically his idea. The creation was not dependent on my efforts at all to any great extent. The one thing I was most heavily involved in with Alan Sieroty was the effort to save the coast. (We're close friends to this day. I mean we've been close friends all along; both came up from the Beverly Hills Democratic Club together. He was the first friend I made when I first came out to California just over 40 years ago.) It was he [Sieroty] who first carried the bill to set up the Coastal Commission. When it was defeated, I carried it over in the Senate side and it was defeated there. It was finally successfully created by Proposition 20 on the ballot. That was the one major effort that I worked on closely with him. I do recall having to deal, when I successfully authored that state parks bill with the late assemblyman Ed Z'berg of Sacramento, who at that time was chairman of whatever the committee was

called in the state Assembly**,** perhaps the State Resources Committee. So, he was the person in the other house who I worked with on the State Parks Redefinition Bill.

PITT: Coming then to Phil [Phillip] Burton and the formation of the Omnibus Bill in '78 I looked at John Jacobs' biography of Burton, *A Rage for Justice.*[1] He says that, although he didn't interview you, he leaves the impression that you clashed considerably with Burton over the vote for Jim Wright for House Majority Leader; and, yet, that you and Burton worked closely on the park. There seems to be a paradox there. What is the answer to that?

BEILENSON: The reason that there isn't [a paradox] is that he got it totally wrong. Annoyingly so. Because it's otherwise an interesting book—the other parts seem to be well done. But the part about my relationship with Phil Burton, although there were strains between us, it wasn't quite as he put it.

Let me move back very quickly a moment. During my first two years in the Legislature, in 1963 and 1964, I served with Phil Burton in the state Assembly. He and I were both there. The beginning of my second term was the beginning of the time he was elected to Congress and went off to Washington. But we were fairly good friends, although somewhat distant—I mean he was from Northern California, I was from Southern, and he was somewhat older, I guess, and had been around a great deal longer than I, but we were pretty good friends in the state Assembly. What I remember most strongly about our relationship is the fact that on several occasions during those two years when we both were in Sacramento together, he and I were the only two "no" votes that were cast on a number of bills which the two of us obviously thought were unwise bills. So we had a certain something in common with respect to our feelings about political issues. He went off to Washington and what is true is that I was never close to him politically. He was part of the old YD—the old Young Democratic movement—and was very reflective of many of the people in it, in the sense that he was a very political person, as of course the Jacobs book points out. I have always been a less political person, a much less partisan person, and someone who wasn't as much of a political animal—and I don't mean that in an unkind way—as Phil and some of his associates were.

When I ran for Congress in 1976, Howard Berman—who was an old YDer himself and a particularly close associate along with Henry Waxman, who was already in the Congress—decided to run also [for the same seat]. And for a couple of weeks he was putting together a potential campaign and succeeded in getting the endorsement both of then Mayor Tom Bradley and then Governor Jerry Brown to support him in the Democratic primary for our congressional seat. And of course Phil Burton was strongly supporting him. They were good friends and political associates, and had been for a good many years. I decided to run myself and made the announcement. And Howard, apparently after taking a poll that showed that I would win by about a two-to-one vote amongst Democrats in the district, pulled out of the race. He told me he was pulling out, and asked me at that time if I would vote for Phil Burton for majority leader, because Phil was going to be running for it at the beginning of next year when the new people first got back to Washington. And I said, "Yes, of course, I would." I didn't do it to get him out of

[1] *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phil Burton* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

the race, he was leaving it anyway. But I'd known Phil for years, and I looked kindly on him even though I wasn't close to him politically, and he was a fellow Californian, and there was no reason in the world for me not to vote for him.

That's not quite true; there was one reason. The reason was not Jim Wright, whom I did not care for particularly and never did, and never was close to. But one of the other persons running for majority leader was Dick Bolling from Missouri, who was somebody I respected greatly, who was chairman of the Rules Committee, and who two years later got me on the Rules Committee, and I did feel very kindly toward him. But I made it very clear to Dick Bolling from the beginning that I had to vote for Phil Burton, and Bolling accepted that. And Phil knew that and accepted it.

There's always been talk, for reasons that I really do not understand. It was my intention from the beginning [to vote for Phil], and I never wavered from it, never thought otherwise than that I'd support Phil. And I did, for all three ballots, or however many there were, and he finally lost by only one vote. There were apparently three or four or five Democrats from California who voted for Wright. I was certainly not among them.

Anyway, Phil and I got along just fine in general. He continued to be a far more political person than I. He was heavily involved, as you know, also with re-apportionment efforts on a couple of occasions, when I don't think he treated me as nicely as he could have, and I don't mean in terms of the district, but just in terms of being open with me about what he was doing, or proposing to do, or getting some input from me. But that is neither here nor there. We got along fine, especially during my first term back there. He knew that I supported him. At the same time, he was probably striving to be as supportive and helpful of me as he possibly could, because he knew I had helped him to the extent I could, and because he believed in working with other people with whom he agreed on most matters. So there was no great problem at all.

Here's one other very minor thing. Phil tried to be helpful to new Democrats as they were first elected to Congress, especially from California, though he supported them from many, many states. That was a source of his strength. And when I first got there in late 1976, when we first started meeting and having orientation courses and so on, prior to the 95th Congress actually being sworn in and meeting, often he kind of took me under his wing, or tried to, to do his best to get me on a couple of committees that I wanted to get on, and that he thought I ought to be on, one of which was the Interior Committee . He failed in his efforts on all of those accounts, and I think was a little embarrassed about it, and I think thereafter made greater efforts, or cared even more, to try to be whatever help he possibly could to help the Santa Monicas bill.

But in any case, he was writing this Omnibus Bill, and in general he wanted as much stuff in it as he possibly could get anyway, because he wanted it to be a big and important bill. He himself, as you well may know—I don't recall if the Jacobs book mentioned it or not—was a totally non-outdoors person.

PITT: Yes, he did mention that.

BEILENSON: He had to be forced to come out and even <u>look</u> at areas he was proposing to make into parks. Nonetheless, his heart was in the right place about these things. He understood it was a good thing to do. A lot of people wanted to do it, and he was more

than happy to be of whatever possible help he could be, in including our Santa Monicas legislation in his own larger bill. That's sort of a long background, but there was no problem there.

PITT: I think that's useful to set the record straight, especially since it was published in that biography.

BEILENSON: I only wish it could have been in Jacobs' book as well.

PITT: Yes, it's too bad that he didn't get the story directly from you. Coming back, then, to the Omnibus Bill itself, how much of the boundary of the park was set in the original bill? Or was it still something to be set afterward?

BEILENSON: I think the correct answer is the latter. The Secretary [of the Interior] basically had six months, after taking certain criteria into consideration which were set forth with certain specificity in the bill itself, to come back and delineate the actual potential area of the NRA. And we did not foresee from the beginning that all of these areas would actually be acquired [or that we would] have to purchase all of these. There could be easements, [and] some of it could be grant moneys to the states. But I think we were a little fluid, at least at the outset, in terms of what exactly the area might include. and, of course, we also knew from the very beginning that there was no way that we'd ever be able, even under the best of circumstances, to appropriate enough money to acquire all the land that a lot of us would like to acquire. There's an awful lot of land there, and it would be nice to have it in the park. We've known from the beginning that mainly because real estate costs, land costs, are so high in Los Angeles, especially compared to most other parts of the country, that we wouldn't be able to acquire everything that we would like to, but would have to be selective. And so we basically ended up describing an area within which we would be able to acquire land and actually purchase it and within which we would do our best, along with the state government, to protect whatever properties were left unbought.

PITT: So you would have preferred otherwise, but you knew that it would be impossible to get all that land.

BEILENSON: We've had so much experience with it over so many years since that time that it's not all that clear to me what I was thinking exactly at that time. And I'm repeating this—but I was new to the Congress—and didn't have such a good feel about what the possibilities or probabilities were as I later came to understand them to be. But I remember that we all realized at the time that we would have to, if at all possible, move as quickly as possible to acquire as much land as possible, because the costs were so great. Especially in those days, the land costs were escalating all the time, especially on that side of town.

Now as you also know, there were times since then, in the '80s, for example, when land prices fortuitously stopped rising for a while and we were able to acquire some properties, but we didn't have an awful lot of money, unfortunately, at that time. We could have done much better if we had had more money, but land prices did not continue

to escalate. As you know we authorized—I think it was $125 million—over a five-year period. We specified actually how much money would be appropriated each year. I don't know, frankly, why we did that because we couldn't appropriate the money that way. It had to be appropriated on an annual basis by the Appropriations Committee. Nevertheless, it's clear, and I remember our thinking and expressing, publicly and privately, that we should try to spend that whole $155 million, or as much of it as we possibly could, as quickly as possible, especially in those first five years, because thereafter prices would continue to rise so we would have that much more difficult a time, whatever money we had for acquiring properties. Well, as it turned out we spent a decent amount of money in the first couple years, which was the last two years of the Carter administration. I don't remember how much we spent. You may have it there, but $30 or $40 million dollars perhaps.

PITT: I do have it. I'm shuffling through my papers here.

BEILENSON: It seemed like a lot at the time because we had hoped to spend $155 [million] or $125 [million] or whatever those first five years. It turned out to be much, much less. It wasn't until just three or four years ago, or two or three years ago, that we finally reached the $125 million limit that we set for ourselves back in 1977-78.

PITT: My figures show in 1979, $15 million; in 1980, $40 million; in 1981, $45 million; and in 1982, $10 million. . . .

BEILENSON: No, no, you are talking about what was authorized by the bill. But we did not actually get that money.

PITT: I see.

BEILENSON: I don't recall what we got, but the authorization meant nothing. We have this peculiar procedure in the Congress—which nobody understands, even those of us who are congressmen. I mean, I did because I was on the budget committee. But the authorization was only important to the extent that Congress was authorized to appropriate separately up to $125 million within those confines. But the appropriation is a completely separate process. And the fact that we had authorized $125 million meant absolutely nothing at all. In fact, that money was actually appropriated in a separate appropriation bill.

So, anyway, we did succeed with the support of the Carter Administration, in appropriating somewhere in the area, as I recall, of $35 or $40 million over the first couple of years. It was a larger amount than we were able to get in any subsequent individual years, but not nearly so much as we had envisioned at the outset. And, of course, we didn't spend anywhere near the total of $125 million, the basic amount that we were authorized to spend. It took us 16, 17, 18 years to get to the $125 million dollars total. And in recent years we were only successful in appropriating $1, $2, $3, or $4 million dollars a year. But it's all within the $125 million that we were [originally] authorized. The appropriations process is a much more conservative [and] difficult process than the authorization process.

PITT: Looking at the Reagan-Bush era, ’81 to ’92, and your struggles to get appropriations, Reagan as a private citizen had sold property to Malibu Creek State Park, but his election as president was not good for the future of the park. What was his outlook, if that’s possible to tell, and what was his impact as president?

BEILENSON: That’s an interesting question, and there are at least a couple of different ways to answer the question. First of all, with respect to the president himself personally, I don’t really know the answer. People talk a lot about him recently. It’s fair to say, I think, that although he was a person who obviously cared about the outdoors, who loved riding horses, who loved being on his ranch, and who appreciated conserving this kind of land in a way that a lot of city growers perhaps don’t, that does not seem to have connected in any direct personal way with the creation of this park or other parks, but especially this park. As you pointed out just now, it was an area that he knew quite well and was particularly fond of, and part of which he owned. So he didn’t need to be told how wonderful it would be to save some of this land for future generations, but that seems not to have entered his mind. I don’t recall any specific personal involvement one way or the other of President Reagan with this particular park. Come to think of it now, perhaps we should have worked harder at approaching him directly on it, but in any case I don’t think we did, or at least we didn’t succeed.

But there are two things that are of particular importance. One is that, as you may recall, his first Secretary of Interior was James Watt, who was, if I may be so bold to say, not at all a Reagan kind of person. The president was a much more decent and understanding kind of human being than Mr. Watt was. In any case, James Watt, from the beginning, disapproved of this particular park, and of three or four others. And for a while there—during his four or five years as interior secretary—he wanted to de-authorize this and those three or four other parks. I mean I understand to a certain extent how some people feel about it, because it’s close to a city, or within the city and county of Los Angeles. It’s an urban recreational area, and it’s not like Yosemite or Yellowstone or some of the other big old parks. The whole idea of an urban park, or something close to an urban area, is something which a lot of people never bought into. And I understand that.

I’ve always been frank to say publicly that if the local communities, especially the county of Los Angeles...

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Please continue, Tony.

BEILENSON: As I was saying, I’ve always been quite frank about the fact, that if the local governmental entities—especially the county of Los Angeles—had been

responsible in terms of fulfilling their responsibilities to both current and future generations living within the county, they themselves would have done far more in terms of preserving this and a good many other areas within the county and city of Los Angeles for park areas in the 1930s, 1940s, ’50s, ’60s, ’70s, or whatever. Aside from Griffith Park we’ve got almost no park area in Los Angeles. In fact, we have less park acreage per capita in Los Angeles than in any other major city in the world, apparently. That may or may not be true. It may be apocryphal but that’s what we’ve believed all our lives and been told all our lives. Aside from 4,000 or so acres in Griffith Park we’ve got almost no parks in Los Angeles, and we’ve got 3 1/2 million people in the city, and about 10 million people in the county who’ve got almost no park land at all.

Just to re-emphasize the point, if the County Board of Supervisors in the previous 20, 30, 40, 50 years had done what it should have done, perhaps it wouldn’t have been necessary for the federal government to step in. It may be that, theoretically, it should be the local people who have the responsibility of preserving these kinds of areas and establishing parks of this sort, but the fact of the matter was they never had. And we could, and we were about to, so we did. I did not want to lose the land for everybody forever just because it wasn’t right for the federal government to do it, because no other level of government was doing it.

In any case, for whatever reason, I don’t think he cared all that much about national parks anyway, but Secretary Watt certainly didn’t see the Santa Monicas as the kind of thing that he was particularly supportive of, and in fact he tried to do away with it. And during the early years, certainly, of the Reagan administration, because of strong opposition from the administration itself, from the Secretary of Interior himself, always raising the question of perhaps we wouldn’t even end up having the park if they could successfully do away with it—that hurt our efforts.

But the other thing that hurt was a more generic kind of problem. It had nothing to do specifically with the Santa Monicas. And that was that during the early and mid-’80s especially, but even since that time—and certainly early in the mid-’80s, starting in 1981 when Mr. Reagan had first been elected president, he succeeded (A.) in cutting taxes deeply, and (B.) in cutting budgets deeply, except with respect to spending for defense, for the military. All of the domestic programs throughout the country were cut deeply starting in 1981-1982. Among those many programs was the National Park Service and the acquisition of land for national parks areas, new and already established. And because we were starting to run big deficits because he had cut taxes so greatly, and having in four or five years actually doubled the amount of money we were spending on defense, on the military budget, virtually all domestic programs and activities of the federal government were adversely affected. Among them was the park service. And among the park areas that were adversely affected was Santa Monica.

Nobody other than James Watt was picking on us—it wasn’t that we were being picked on. It’s just that all domestic federal programs were being squeezed, and we were among many that were being squeezed. That was directly due to the efforts of the Reagan administration, and the Congress following along in lockstep, unfortunately, cutting budgets and cutting taxes, and therefore having less money.

But even after Mr. Reagan was gone, we had these huge federal deficits running, until just this year. All of which have made it very difficult for the Congress—even when it was a Democratic Congress up to three years ago—to vote monies for programs that

not only we in the Congress, but that the people back home throughout the country, were supportive of. In a time of $200 billion federal deficits, it was extremely difficult—almost impossible—to get the money for acquiring some more land for the Santa Monicas, just to pick this one example. But there were hundreds of other examples throughout the country, of parks and social welfare programs, of any number of things that people cared about: Head Start programs—whatever it is that's of interest to you—educational programs, health care programs—were not getting the monies that they would otherwise have gotten because of these huge budget deficits. We were among the many people who suffered because of it.

PITT: Now, there were some very big property owners, some very big stake holders in the mountains and they probably did try to influence the outcome of appropriations or the basic legislation, or the policies in Sacramento. What's your take on them?

BEILENSON: When we start getting to specifics, I'm afraid I am of less help to you than some of our other people who were more directly involved, including a lot of people back home on the ground in Los Angeles. At the time we established the park in 1977-78, in the 95th Congress, I don't recall whether there was any effect at all on the shape of the specifics of our legislation because of the interests—perhaps adverse interests—of land owners, big or small, back in Los Angeles. We were dealing at that time simply with the generic idea of creating a park. We weren't talking about any specific properties at all. We were talking about a general area, and people who were land owners in that area, obviously, may well have had concerns. But since it was known from the beginning that we weren't going to be able—even if we wanted to—to acquire all the properties within that general area, I don't recall that people had specific concerns with the creation of the park as such. Even more so, I do not recall that they had any specific effects on any particular parts of the legislation. But Sue Nelson and Gail Osherenko, who was my staff person who was most directly involved at that time, perhaps may have some other recollection.

Later on, when we were talking about appropriating monies, and so on, then the interests of individual property owners came into play more often than they did in terms of writing the original bill.

PITT: Your perception of the [Santa Monica Mountains] Conservancy—I'd appreciate your telling us about how the legislation dovetailed with the actions of the Conservancy and with Joe [Joseph T.] Edmiston [Executive Director].

BEILENSON: I'm happy to. But again let me be quite frank about this, I was hardly aware of the existence of the Conservancy back at the beginning. We were heavily involved in creating the park just about the time the Conservancy itself was created. I guess it was created just a bit before our bill. I am not even sure what its purpose was at that time. I suspect—I don't know, you'll have to ask Joe Edmiston—but I guess its role in life has evolved over time, too, as various challenges have come about and situations have changed. But in any case, at the beginning, and for the first few years, I must tell you that whatever good deeds the Conservancy may have been doing, or was trying to do, were largely things that I was not terribly aware of. My job was to get our bill passed, or

our NRA included in the major bill, hope to get the bill passed in whatever form we we'd be getting, and thereafter getting money appropriated to buy some of these lands.

The first two years, and the first large appropriations were all undertaken, with whatever success we had, without much concern or awareness on my part—probably on our staff's part also—as to what, or whether, the Conservancy may have been doing. And I suspect that in those days at least we were working not all at cross-purposes, but each on our own, doing whatever we could do under our own authority.

Where we started becoming involved—[by] we I'm talking about the federal efforts—with the Conservancy, most especially over the past ten years, and to whatever extent somewhat before that, especially during the "drought" times, as it were, which I was describing to you a little, starting in the Reagan years and continuing to many of the Bush years, and even beyond. Interestingly it was the Conservancy, in many fiscal years, that had more money available to it, either through state appropriations or through bond issues. It had more money available for purchase of land within and beyond, actually, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area than we at the federal government level had. And it became more and more apparent to me, and I guess to them too, that to the extent that we could work together, it would be better for everybody. It never made any difference to most of us, I think, who owned the land. I wanted very much—and Joe Edmiston and everybody else involved—wanted very much for the public to own as much of this land, or as much of the good parts of the land, as we possibly could acquire.

It didn't make a huge amount of difference whether the Conservancy acquired it, or we did. In many cases they were there to give the land to us, or sell the land to us, and with the resulting money go out and acquire more money. And to the extent that the Conservancy was more effective in acquiring properties that all of us wanted to acquire, then the more strength to them. And for a good many years in there, maybe from the mid-'80s to the early '90s, certainly the Conservancy was more successful—if that's the right way to put it—in having funds available to acquire properties and was the lead agency often because it had the wherewithal that we didn't have, that is, that the National Park Service didn't have.

I am also frank to say that [Edmiston] was a far more effective and successful leader of his group than was at least one of our [NPS] superintendents and perhaps two of them. And I don't fault them entirely because they, again, didn't have resources, simply weren't able to get the money back here in Washington during those years. It was just natural that Joe Edmiston and the Conservancy would start to play more of a leading role during those years when the federal government didn't have an awful lot to offer, in terms of resources with which to acquire properties. We now are in a situation where we have an extremely able National Park Service presence there. I believe that it's working on a more even basis with the Conservancy.

PITT: In Arthur Eck?

BEILENSON: In Arthur Eck, and his associates. Yes. I only wish we had him some years previously. It would have been helpful to Joe and everybody for these two people to be working in tandem on a more even basis than was true with Joe and Dave [David] Gackenbach.

PITT: Prior to Dave Gackenbach there was Mr. [Robert] Chandler.

BEILENSON: Yes, Bob Chandler was our first superintendent, somebody for whom I have the greatest respect and affection and who I think as did as good a job as one could do. Bob was also there during the earlier, more halcyon years where we had at the time a lot more resources available than we were ever going to have thereafter. We had one superintendent after Bob Chandler and before Dave Gackenbach.

PITT: Mr. [Daniel] Kuehn, I believe.

BEILENSON: Dan Kuehn, also a very good guy. I think he'd come from Gettysburg [National Park], but I'm not sure. But his job was made more difficult by the fact that he was there during the years when we were simply unable to acquire much money appropriated back here in Washington.

PITT: I wanted you to talk a little bit about press coverage, if you would. I've reviewed the *L.A. Times* coverage on the NRA and there are positive editorials, but most of the news appears only in the [San Fernando] Valley edition. Did you have any particular feeling that you weren't getting good coverage from the *Times*?

BEILENSON: Yes, but the longer one's in this business, the more one realizes there's nothing peculiar about that. The *Times*—which I'm fond of, generally speaking, and which is very helpful to us in many respects, and sometimes is more helpful than in other times—but the editorial board I was quite close to and felt kindly toward—thought of itself, quite properly, as not only a regional but also a national paper. And in terms of this park and almost anything else that went on in that part of the woods—I mean anything in the Valley, for example—was [printed] in the Valley section of the *Times.* It didn't even appear over in the Westside section, which hardly exists anyway, but certainly not in their regular paper. And you just come to accept that. It's just the way the *Times* works. They looked at this as sort of an L.A. *Times* regional issue, not just the whole Los Angeles region, and therefore put it in its regional edition. It was hardly ever mentioned in the regular Downtown edition, or the general edition, except that, editorially speaking, as you mentioned, they were usually quite supportive. Their editorials were in their regular edition. Of course, they have some regional editorials, as well.

PITT: I know that you were not involved with acquiring specific properties. On the other hand, you did hike and you did visit and you were informed about them. I'll just list off some of the properties, and if there's a particular anecdote, or story, or sentiment about any one of them, just stop me. Otherwise, I'll just keep going.

BEILENSON: May I say something first. What you say is true, and certainly for the first good many years, I did not get involved in any very specific way, in terms of helping pick properties, or suggesting to the Park Service or the Conservancy or anyone that I hoped they would acquire this area or the other area. I thought it was the proper thing to do—and it may be, I'm not sure. [But] I started believing several years ago that I should

perhaps get more personally involved in this myself to a certain extent, if only because my point of view was somewhat different from others.

I knew relatively little about specific property problems, or land-owner problems, or pressures at the local level. [But] seeing this only as someone who cared for the park as a whole, I came to believe that in some respects my point of view represented sort of a more—I don't want to sound foolish about this—a better overall viewpoint of what was good for the park than perhaps those who had to deal with difficult, and dirty, and complicated day-to-day problems of actually acquiring properties. So I'm not putting these people down at all. I mean, they were there on the ground and they had to deal with landowners, many of whom were very difficult, and pesty and so on. And I didn't have to deal with that. But it got to the point where, in the last few years, I've expressed my opinion more than I did at the beginning, when I did not do it at all. I did this only because they were running into so many difficulties and having to make so many difficult choices, (a couple of which I wasn't all that fond of), that [I began] urging them to acquire properties that I had seen, and which I had thought would be really good to have in the park. I would express my point of view and push a little bit, and perhaps had some success in [pushing] those properties to be successfully acquired.

PITT: That puts it in perspective. I'll list some of the properties. I know that you were directly involved with a few of them: Solstice Canyon, Temescal Gateway, Sage Ranch, Stunt Ranch . . .

BEILENSON: I will interrupt this for a moment. Most of those [properties] I guess almost everybody was on board with. We wanted to acquire any of them and that's what we did. Some of them were, of course, acquired at the very beginning.

PITT: So that applies to those, perhaps?

BEILENSON: Oh, I think so. Again, someone like Sue Nelson and some others have much better recollections of what happened because they have had to deal with them all their lives, and I haven't. But to the best of my recollection these were things we were all in general agreement on, and came mostly at the beginning, when we had all kinds of money and were just trying to acquire as much as we possibly could, as quickly as we could.

PITT: The Soka [University] Property—that's a big one.

BEILENSON: Let's hold off on that and come back to it.

PITT: Okay, it comes a little later.

BEILENSON: And it's still hanging.

PITT: And it's still hanging. I am looking at the list of questions that I have that pertain maybe to a more recent period of time.

BEILENSON: Were you through with your list of properties? Because if you are, we'll talk about Soka.

PITT: No. Here I go: Elyria Canyon Park, Fryman/Willacre Canyon . . .

BEILENSON: Now one of them I'm not happy with. I can't remember which one it is. Is it Fryman? Is that the $10 million dollar one?

PITT: The truth is I don't know the details myself, but that one, I believe, is in Beverly Hills.

BEILENSON: That's the one I've been unhappy about from the beginning. Fortunately it's just water over the dam. Not much to be done about it. No sense my getting very much involved with it. It sort of goes from Mulholland down over some very undevelopable land which the Conservancy I think paid $8 million or $10 million for, and the National Park Service ended up reimbursing them, for which I've long been unhappy about. I've also disagreed with some of the other folks, including my good friend Sue Nelson, about how much money should be spent up in the upper Topanga Canyon. Unfortunately, so much of the surrounding area is being developed that although this would have been prime parkland in my book, if we could have acquired it and some surrounding acreage from the beginning—15 or 20 years ago—or however long it has taken—it has been acquired relatively recently and unfortunately, it's within view of a decent amount of development. But nonetheless it's been done and I'm glad it's there.

PITT: With respect to development, things have changed since 1978, haven't they?

BEILENSON: They have, although I think it's fair to say—others know more about it than I—there's been somewhat <u>less</u> development than one might perhaps have predicted earlier on, 20 years ago. There hasn't been an awful lot of the wrong kind of development—[but] some of these enormous mansions that are inappropriate anywhere, in my opinion—but <u>certainly</u> inappropriate up in the hills. They are, perhaps, 6,000 or 7,000 square feet or more, some of them. People who want to live in the Santa Monicas—or any mountainous area—they could build things which blended more with the surrounding land, and were more appropriate to their surroundings than these are. But they have popped up, these enormous things, along ridge lines which are effectively, not destroyed, but—you have to live with them, you have to accept them, there they are—but it's a huge shame that as much development has occurred as has, in fact, occurred.

PITT: There were some successes—clear successes—like the Streisand Center for Conservancy Studies.

BEILENSON: Yes, but my take on that—and I'm not sure it's the correct one—is quite different from many other people's. I don't know what was acquired there, frankly—some property down there that the Conservancy, or one of its offshoots, uses as a headquarters.

PITT: It is currently the Conservancy itself.

BEILENSON: Whatever one gets, is nice. But you don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

PITT: The Bob Hope property—that is, Sampo [Farms] near Malibu Creek—would that be one of the failures?

BEILENSON: He's an elderly gentleman—although he used to be not quite so elderly and he was just as difficult then. I don't know how one deals with a well-known national figure who deserves an awful lot of credit for a lot of things he's done, including entertaining the troops every year, over the past 50 years or so. But I've got to say that I've always found it difficult to understand why such a person, who has such an enormous amount of money, especially in his later years, not only did he never donate money or property to the park (which nobody ever asked him for), but apparently found it impossible even to sell at a decent price some properties to the park, which would have been hugely helpful to us. But here's a person who could be described as a national hero, or national treasure, or something of that sort, who remains the largest property holder in the whole area, who's been of no help at all, in terms of helping us establish the park. It's of no detriment to him, it's not as if anybody was expecting him to give us land. If I were worth a few hundred million dollars, and if I owned tens of millions of dollars' worth of property in the park, I think I would have been happy to sell to the federal or the state governments some of the nicer pieces of property to help enhance the park. I just don't know why it hasn't happened.

PITT: To your knowledge, no one actually asked him that question directly?

BEILENSON: I think the answer is no, and I guess that must have been a failure of ours, too. But I've never found a way to get to Mr. Hope. I've dealt on a few occasions with a gentleman, who unfortunately died a couple of years ago, who was one of his principal attorneys who was a lovely man, [but] he was just representing his client's wishes. I just don't know how to explain it. It's a shame because I think Mr. Hope, more than any other single person, could have been of great help to us in making the park a lot better even than it is.

PITT: I see.

BEILENSON: I hope I'm not being unduly harsh on him.

PITT: Well, I think it's important for you to have said that, though. Let me ask you then about the Soka matter. People generally think of Soka as the heart of the park, and from an administrative point of view, to have had that strategic spot would have made a big difference. What's been your take on the Soka issue over the years?

BEILENSON: Well, it keeps changing, of course, because the circumstances keep changing. And I'm not sure I have all of the most recent facts right at my finger tips. But from the beginning it was a piece of property which was, as you suggest, first of all,

physically kind of in the heart of the mountains. And a pretty level piece of land—much of it, anyway—so it is useable for park administrative purposes. And in many respects, perhaps one of the nicest things about it is that it's right across the street from Malibu Creek State Park, a beautiful park, with some beautiful small peaks and lovely rolling areas just within sight of what is now the so-called Soka property—formerly the Claretian property, I guess.

Again, the further back one goes, the less good my memory is. We made some earlier efforts during [NPS Superintendent] Dan Kuehn's administration to acquire the property. As I recall—I don't know whose fault it was, I don't think it was ours—I think we made every effort that we could properly make at the time to acquire the property. And as I recall we were outbid by the Soka people. Again, I'm just taking figures off the top of my head, but I think we offered $11 million and they came up with $13 million. It sounds like an awfully small amount now, but [that was] 10, 12, or 15 years ago. That's how long they were involved. And they bought the property. I mean it's tragic, and I thought it was at the time, and looking back I certainly think it is.

But this is where we part company with some of our friends on the ground there. You have to deal in reality, you just have to. We all have the same wishes—we all wish the whole area could be acquired for the public and that we can save it all. And I mean it deeply. I care just about this as some of these folks who are still raising a lot of hullabaloo about our failure thus far to acquire the Soka property. But we were outbid for it. I mean, it's the United States of America, and people are entitled to sell property to whomever they wish, for the highest price that they want to. Soka has owned the land for 10 years or more. I'm not sure how long it is.

The battle most recently joined is whether or not one would be supportive of the efforts that I was involved in, most importantly [with] a relatively new [Los Angeles County] supervisor—no longer quite so new on the scene, Zev Yaroslavsky—in trying to reach some agreement with the Soka people as to limiting their development of their campus on the property, and to limit the impact on the surrounding park lands, always with the hope that someday, perhaps, they might give up the ghost, and go ahead with developing their larger property now in Orange County and give or sell this property to the federal government so that we could use it.

Meanwhile there was a proposed agreement with them, which the Conservancy entered into two, three, or four years ago which would have allowed them to grow a certain amount. I was very much opposed to it. I thought it was allowing them to grow too large. We went [into] negotiations with Zev Yaroslavsky, who was responsible for them, but he had my complete support. He and I spoke at length and continuously about what it is we could agree to. We are each of us supportive of the other's efforts even though he was the prime mover in it, as the supervisor, and we've now come up with an agreement which would limit future growth of Soka to quite a very modest degree. There are a lot of people out there who are very unhappy with it [the agreement], saying we should acquire the property.

PITT: Through eminent domain? What about that concept?

BEILENSON: Well, the Conservancy tried that. First of all, it's not clear that we could proceed successfully that way. But, secondly, you've got to have the money sitting there,

so that if a court finds in your favor, and then says the proper market value is $35 million—pulling a figure out of the hat—you've got to have that money available to plunk down to acquire the property. Otherwise, you yourself, I believe—Joe Edmiston knows the answers to these questions—are subject to damages. The Conservancy, which led the original effort to take by eminent domain, was concerned about getting itself into a situation where the individual [board] members would be liable if they couldn't come up with the money. In fact, there was a higher appraisal on the [property].

What is also true, unfortunately, is that much of the property right around the level area of Soka has been at least partially developed, so that the overall property is less enticing than it used to be. Part of it [is] somewhat destroyed, at least visually.

Meanwhile, we've gotten Soka to agree to limit its future development there to a much more modest degree than they had originally spoken of. Originally, as I recall, there would be as many as 3,500 students. Now it's limited to 600 or so. And they [agreed to] granting some of the property over to the public's use, and limiting the footprint, as it were, of parts of the property they would build on, or use, to a fraction—maybe 50 or 60 percent of the property they own. All of which, given the alternative, Mr. Yaroslavsky and I thought this was a very useful and good development.

People who have always wanted to acquire Soka, and are unhappy with anything less than that, are unhappy with this [compromise] and I understand their point of view. I just don't know what the alternative is. The realities are, there's no money from the federal government to acquire this property. We don't have much in the way of a choice, in my opinion.

PITT: You met with the president and the chairman of the board of Soka in December of 1993. Can you tell us what went on there that wasn't reported in the press?

BEILENSON: I'm happy to. I didn't even remember that anything was reported in the press, because I didn't make anything of it. I did it purely on a personal level. I have some modest and very limited understanding of how things are done in Japan, and of personal relationships, and so on. . . . when people were speaking about the potential use of the land . . . some thought that perhaps because it was owned by a Japanese group back there in Japan that people thought less of it than otherwise. We had a very civil and, [though] I hoped at the time, [it] turned out not to be, I guess, a very useful few hours of discussion. I spoke very frankly and very kindly and civilly to this nice gentleman, Mr. _____, who is about my age, maybe a year or two younger than I—just about the situation. [I told him] how strongly we felt about this and all the things you and I have just talked about, how for years all the people around here wanted this particular area to be in our park, how sorry we are that we weren't able to acquire it originally, but Soka did, and how much we still want it, and all that, and how strongly we feel about it has nothing to do with the fact that it's Soka or a Japanese-run group. I mean, if UCLA or Pepperdine or USC or anybody else had acquired the property we would have thought just as strongly that this was an inappropriate area in which to develop and to build a campus. It just doesn't belong up there. It didn't make sense.

PITT: Did you convince him of that, with respect to the prejudice?

BEILENSON: I hope so. I do believe so. I can't tell you for sure, but I think it was a very good hour spent together, and I think they came away understanding how I felt personally about the whole thing, and how other people felt. Because, in fact, that's the truth. It doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me who it is that wants to build there. If it were my good friends at UCLA, I'd be just as angry with them as I am at Soka. It doesn't make the slightest difference to me. It's just that I've always, along with everybody else out in the western part of Los Angeles, wanted that as park land. It could be some foundation that I loved and was personally involved in, I still would think that it would be an improper use of the land. Any use other than preserving it for park, and perhaps for a visitor center, or park administrative headquarters, it would be fine for that. Anything else is just wrong use for it, in my opinion. But nonetheless, they want the property and are going to use it as they wish. And though I keep hoping against hope that they are going to develop their other property and find that this one doesn't make an awful lot of sense, someday, somehow, we'll sit down with them. Meanwhile, the surrounding properties, part of which they also own, are being developed.

PITT: I have some miscellaneous questions. But we have been talking for a while. Would you like to take a little break?

BEILENSON: You want to give me ten minutes?

PITT: Okay, I'll call you back around five minutes to one. Thank you.

End of Tape 1, Side B

Beginning of Tape 2, Side A

PITT: Well, I've learned many things here today—one is that you are, indeed, a person of the outdoors. You are often depicted in the press clippings as a man in a conservative suit or shirt sleeves and a neck tie, but there is that other side.

BEILENSON: There is. But to be truthful about it, at least until recently, when I went hiking, I usually used an old button-down Brooks Brothers shirt or [laughter] old pair of gray slacks, so I'd look as well dressed in the mountains as I do elsewhere.

PITT: Looking at another side of this, I wonder whether there are some books that have, over the years—before or after—influenced your thinking about the environment.

BEILENSON: I suppose the answer is yes, but, there's been no epiphany. I mean I've read Aldo Leopold, and I love his *Sand County Almanac*. I've read a lot of Wallace Stegner, although not so much his park stuff, or his wilderness stuff, as his novels, or literature. I recently re-read—actually it was a couple of years ago—in fact I have it right here on my desk because I enjoy it so much—Henry David Thoreau's journal.

PITT: Is it the one on the Merrimack River, or *Walden Pond*?

BEILENSON: No, not either one. It's the one on *The Maine Woods*, my favorite place in the world. One of my favorite places in the world is Mount Katahdin, which is in north-central Maine and is the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. And in 1847, 1851 and 1853, Thoreau canoed and hiked up around Katahdin and the Penobscot River and up Katahdin itself. Actually he didn't get to the summit. And I recently re-read his journals of his days in the Maine woods, which is one of my very favorite books. So, these are things I'm familiar with, and I've always enjoyed, but they've just grown out of my already existing appreciation of wilderness and of parks and of things of that sort. Our family, as I said earlier, has always spent a lot of time in such places. I suppose we've visited three- quarters of our national parks.

PITT: When you were in Congress, other environmental bills came up, or maybe you introduced some, I don't know. Were you an active part of some other legislation?

BEILENSON: Yes, I was, and I forgot to mention that. I'm glad you asked about it, although, again, my role was necessarily limited, because after my first term there, where I served on the Judiciary and Foreign Affairs Committees, I was put on the Rules Committee by then Speaker Tip O'Neill. When you serve on the Rules Committee you cannot serve on any other standing committee. I did serve later on the Budget Committee which is a select committee, not a standing committee, and I served for seven years on the Intelligence Committee, including two years as chairman of the Intelligence Committee, but that too was a select committee rather than a standing committee. So that if I had been on the Committee on Natural Resources, the old Interior Committee, I would have carried a lot of bills in this area.

What I did do in any case—with some success because I had some good friends helping—I am the principal author of a bill which was passed back in 1988, the Elephant Protection Act, which basically prohibited the importation into the United States of ivory from elephants. It was the catalyst, apparently and fortuitously, for other nations following suit. The CITES (that is, the Convention and International Treaty on Endangered Species) followed suit in Lausanne, Switzerland, about a year later, putting elephants on the endangered list, so that one cannot sell ivory anywhere at all in the world any more. And we have, I think, almost single handedly sort of led to the saving I hope—at least for the moment—of the African elephant.

PITT: Terrific!

BEILENSON: Yes. I was very pleased about that. And one other thing that I was involved in was a similar one, having to do with rhinos and tigers, and another one on birds—you know endangered species of various kinds. So that even from my perch on the Rules Committee, I was able to keep a hand in some of these things, but not nearly so much as I would have if I had been a member of a committee that had jurisdiction over any of these areas.

PITT: Was the 1978 Santa Monica bill the most important bill that you worked on?

BEILENSON: That I was the author of, I think. Certainly in the Congress. The Congress is a totally different place, as you well know, from the state Legislature. The Legislature is a small place—there were 40 of us in the state Senate, and 80 of us in the state Assembly—and during my 14 years there I was the author of almost 200 bills that became laws. Some fairly major ones, I think. The Welfare Reform Act of 1971. I was also the principal author of the bill which legalized abortion in California, and a lot of other things, a lot of different areas, actually. But when you get to the Congress you are very limited. First of all, you're one out of 435 members. At the beginning, at least until you acquire some seniority or become chairman of a subcommittee or a full committee, there's not much you can do. And again you're limited, as we discussed just a few minutes ago, in terms of the jurisdiction over which your committees have. You can't be a far-ranging legislator, with some exceptions, in the House of Representatives, the way you can in the state Legislature. You are more or less limited to working in areas that your committees have jurisdiction over, and I was basically on the Rules Committee, which has original jurisdiction over nothing, except the budget act. I was the author of some changes in the budget act, but not much else.

PITT: But you will take the title of the "Father of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area"?

BEILENSON: I'll be happy to, and proud to, because I'm delighted about the success we've had, even though its not so much as I would have hoped for, and you would also have hoped for. And again, with the understanding, as is very clear from our conversations earlier today, that the whole thing was quite fortuitous. A lot of ground work had been done by a lot of other people who had been involved in this long before I came along.

Secondly, when I did come along, I came along at a time when change was possible, and passage of the bill was made a good deal easier by what else was going on back here in Washington, and particularly by Phil Burton's successfully carrying that year his Omnibus Parks Bill. So, I'm happy to be called that, but a lot of other folks had a lot to do with it.

PITT: I'm wondering about the degree to which you rated the park as a success. I'm looking over my shoulder at a map, "Santa Monica Mountains Land Protection Map."

And what I see from this distance of about five feet, and even up close, is a patchwork of park land and suburban development, and undeveloped areas.

BEILENSON: We knew from the beginning it would be a patchwork, no matter how successful it would be. The question is whether we've got all the right patches. The answer, of course, is, no. There are some patches that I wish were the color of public lands, rather than private lands, or desired lands, including especially the one we talked about just a little while ago, the Soka property. I mean there are a few properties like

that—that's the outstanding one, I suppose. That's the one which is very much where the color of acquired park lands [should be].

PITT: Is it still a work in progress? You think if we looked at the map 20 years from now, it will have changed, improved?

BEILENSON: I believe so, and I certainly hope so. I mean, there are both up sides and down sides to that. On the one hand, yes, I hope very much, and I do believe that in the course of the next 10 years—perhaps longer—we'll, at whatever pace, get some more money appropriated. I'm sure we shall, and can still acquire some additional properties, and make it an even better park than we have now.

We shouldn't forget that it's partly a question of how you look at it, whether it's a glass half full or a glass half empty. And if for no other reason than because one wants to keep going and keep believing in these things, you sort of look at it as a glass half full. Of course, there have been some losses, or some things we've not succeeded in doing, but basically we've got quite a park here that we didn't have before. We've saved an awful lot of land, and it's a wonderful thing.

You put it very well; it's a work in progress. [Despite] what some of my former colleagues in the Congress—especially those who were not all that excited about helping Los Angeles—perceived, I think it's a national area. It was certainly intended to be. But all of these things are somewhat local, too. If you come from Ohio, you don't worry about California so much as you do about the Cuyahoga Valley in Ohio.

People do keep asking us, "When is this going to end? You people always want money for ever and ever and ever." And we keep saying, "If you'd give us a decent amount, we'd acquire the necessary remaining properties and get it over with. But if you keep dribbling out $1 or $2 or $3 million a year, it's going to go on forever, because you can't expect us to acquire anything except some very modest-sized connecting properties—for the Backbone Trail, or whatever—with those kinds of monies." If we could get say—I'm just talking again off the top of my head—-$40 or $50 million to spend in the next year or so, we could pick up several remaining major areas and basically let it go at that, or in the future perhaps a little bit more around the edges.

But it doesn't look as if we are going to succeed in getting such a large sum all at once. Of course, other parks aren't either. It's not just us, as I pointed out before. We are all having similar problems. It's just that we, as an evolving, and relatively newly created park, have bigger problems than something like Yellowstone, let's say, which has been there for 125 years or more. Even though it needs additional protection around the edges and often doesn't get what it needs, at least it still has got its basic big park area, whereas we are still very much something in formation, although we're getting there. But I do hope that we will continue to acquire some properties at least into the near future.

PITT: I read a newsletter a few years ago that said, if it weren't for you, the park would have expired a long time ago, and the boundary line would have been eradicated, and the administration merged into the Channel Islands unit. Is there any truth to that?

BEILENSON: I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't want to deny that it might possibly happen. That may well have been alluding to Watt. That's exactly what Secretary Watt

wanted to do. It's certainly true that my being there all those years, and the fact that I got along well with most of my colleagues from both parties, was helpful to us back in Washington.

The sad truth of the matter is that at times it made almost no difference as to how much was going on back in California, or how hard or how much the men and women who were fighting for this cared about it, or what they did, because the answer—to the extent there was an answer—was how much money we were getting appropriated in Washington. And that was my responsibility. And though I didn't do as well as I would have wanted, I think it's fair to say I did better than perhaps other people would have done.

[And it's fair to point out—and people should know—that we were more successful in Washington than some of our park enthusiasts back home in California might be aware of. Although we didn't get as much money as we would have liked, 18 percent of all the money appropriated for national parkland acquisition nation-wide over the past 10 years went to this one park—so we did very well under the circumstances.]

It's also—as we said—a good thing that the Conservancy came along during much of the past 10 years, because it had some money that we didn't have. We worked together, at the same time making the point back here in Washington, especially amongst our Republican colleagues, who like to hear these kinds of things, that the state and local governments were [cooperating]. We sort of always overstated what we thought the local people were doing—because they never did an awful lot, but the state certainly, through Joe's [Joseph T. Edmiston's] group and others have done quite a decent amount. We were able to show this as a developing partnership between the federal and local governments, or state governments, which sort of strengthened our hand back [in Washington]. So, one way or another we found the way to continue, and I hope that we will continue to for at least the foreseeable near future, at least until we get some more properties protected, and saved for future generations.

PITT: In passing you mentioned the people who worked for you. Gail Osherenko, and so on. Let's make sure that we've mentioned all of them, and that we understand what their duties may have been. I'll read the names and you stop me at any time and add whatever you think might be helpful to the record. There's Gail . . .

BEILENSON: Let's start for a moment with Gail. Gail Osherenko was one of two women who were legislative assistants of mine during my last couple of years in Sacramento and who came with me to Washington when I first went there in 1977. So she was, as they say, present at the creation. She was our Washington staff person who was involved in all of the legislative stuff that went on, you know, with Phil Burton, with Bob Lagomarsino, with Barry Goldwater, Jr., with the staff of the Interior Committee, and everybody else back in Washington during the first two years, especially when the bill was being written and during which time it was passed and then signed into law. She was the principal person in terms of the creation of the park. I don't recall if anybody back home in Los Angeles had much to do with that, because that really was a question of legislative maneuvering. I think it's fair to say, but I don't want to be unfair to anybody.

Gail left shortly thereafter, and a good many others have been involved in two different ways. I guess they were women mainly. We're talking about Linda Freidman, particularly, and who else do we have there on your list?

PITT: Felicia Marcus, Melissa Kukro, Linda, Joan Prince, Virginia Spielberg, Susan Little—these are some of the names.

BEILENSON: Those were the principal names. They were all just valuable public servants and wonderful workers in my own office. Two or three or four of the women were in the Los Angeles office, and a couple of them were in our Washington office. Because of their location, their duties were distinct and somewhat different.

Melissa Kukro worked with me through the end, through the year-before-last, when I was last in office. She was with me I think a total of 17 years, and came, I guess, directly after Gail Osherenko left. Melissa was the one who was here in Washington, although she traveled several times—once every couple of years on average—back to Los Angeles to see the mountains and whatever. She was my principal staff person back here in terms of helping me acquire appropriations from Sid Yates' Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations. She's the one who helped write the testimony, and work with the appropriations subcommittee staff back here in Washington to acquire the appropriations over the past 16, 17 years, which has been our principal work ever since the park was established, as we discussed, in 1977-78. That was over and done with but the whole process of acquiring the money for it continued from that time on. The other women, Linda [Friedman], and Joan Prince, and . . .

PITT: Virginia Spielberg.

BEILENSON: Spielberg, and especially, if I may say so, in recent years, certainly Susan Little, who works for Congressman Brad Sherman, my successor. [They] have played a very valuable role in terms of all of the things we do in Los Angeles with respect to staying in touch with others who care about the park, in terms of working with the Conservancy, and working with whomever the park director at the particular time might be. Susan Little also has been responsible for Brad Sherman's continuing efforts here in Washington to get money appropriated. She's had a lot of experience, and he's short on some legislative help back here in office. But they've all played very valuable roles—either in Washington or in Los Angeles—by keeping us involved directly with everybody, both in Washington and Los Angeles, who cares about the park.

PITT: I know that over the years you've acknowledged that your wife, Dolores, has influenced you on some political matters. Was the mountains one of them?

BEILENSON: No. I mean, she's been supportive on everything I've ever done, including this, and I don't want to take away any credit, but no, it's not been from her. The inspiration has been all internal with me and through these other folks who've been involved with these matters back in Los Angeles.

PITT: Is the Santa Monica National Recreation Area an instance of how government should work? We've seen a lot of arguments about how it doesn't work, and never works.

BEILENSON: You know, it's always easiest for politicians—that's their stock-in-trade—to bring things home. It's often spoken of as "pork." A lot of people made the joke at the time of Phil Burton's Omnibus Bill that they were equating parks with pork. To be perfectly candid about it, that was our pork, in the best possible sense. But pork is always dependent on the eyes of the viewer. People are always upset about agricultural people getting their stuff. But it's what's important to them. Other people want roads and dams, things that are necessary to keep their economy going, or keep them in business back in Portsmouth, or wherever it might be. And for our people, if I may presume to suggest what people care about, certainly one of the things is this park.

I also neglected to mention, it's only very peripheral, but I spent a lot of time also in very much the same way, creating a park out of the San Fernando Valley, in the Sepulveda flood control basin, which actually just last month was renamed after me, despite my efforts to prevent that occurring. We've got a lovely 100-and-some-acre park right in the middle of the Valley because there never used to be a park there.

But yes, from my point of view, and from the point of view of anyone who likes this expenditure of tax funds for purposes such as these—and they are very minor compared to everything else that we spend money on—yes, it's a very good example of what government can and should do.

In fact, in my opinion—and not everybody agrees—there are certain things that government alone can't do. And other things you can argue about: how much government should be involved in education, or social services, or social welfare, or whatever it is. But with respect to the creation of parks and public spaces and public areas such as this, for the public good, there's no alternative but to have the government involved. And although one can argue, as I discussed at some length several minutes ago, that maybe the federal government shouldn't have done this but some more local form of government [should have], nonetheless, local governments never did do anything to create parks there. So, by that time I didn't care. I felt we should save this land if we possibly could, and if the only way to do it was through the federal government, so be it. But, yes, I think it's a very great example of government doing something that people—to the extent they think about it or they care about it—would agree is a very good thing for government to do.

PITT: That seems like an excellent point to stop. Just on a personal note I want to congratulate you on your contribution on the Santa Monica Mountains and I thank you.

BEILENSON: But I loved doing it. If I had my "druthers," I'd just create parks all over the place.

PITT: [laughter] Wonderful!

BEILENSON: The great thing about parks, Len, is that they last. I've got to admit my bias. There are all kinds of moneys you can spend on social welfare, or on education—all obviously necessary kinds of things—but you spend it and it's all gone and you've got to

do it again the next year. But when you buy some land for parks they are forever. And it's a great use of money because whatever inflated cost you may have to buy it at, 20, 30 years later it looks like an awfully good buy. You've got this land forever, whatever we acquire—50 or 100 years from now it will still be there for people.

PITT: I like that. You should be justly proud of it.

BEILENSON: I'm pleased with it. I was very happy to have been around at a time when it all became possible.

PITT: That's wonderful. I'm going to end on that note.

End of Tape 2, Side A

End of Interview

— II —

THE STATE PARKS AS PARTNERS

An Interview with Russell W. Cahill

Russell Cahill, Director of California State Parks and Recreation when the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area first came on the scene, was interviewed by phone on August 12, 1999.

Interviewee: Russell W. Cahill
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape 1, Side A

PITT: Mr. Cahill is at his home. Where are you, Russ?

CAHILL: Olympia, Washington.

PITT: I am at home in West Los Angeles. We have agreed to call each other Russ and Len or Leonard. Very nice to meet you, and I think we are ready to go. Now before we get into the major themes of the interview, would you please tell me, Russ, a little bit about yourself by way of background: where you were born and raised and about your education; when you first came to California; and about your professional background. I know that you were once in the National Park Service and you could give us a few details about that. Please.

CAHILL: I was born in San Francisco in July of 1938. My father is a Hawaiian man who emigrated here when he was six years old, and my mother grew up in San Francisco. I went to public schools. I grew up in the Bay area. Graduated from high school in a town called Campbell and went back [East] to Michigan State University, primarily to play football. After a couple of years of that and a stint in the army, I went back to school for serious and got a biology degree from San Jose State. By then I had married, had three children and I had worked for the sheriff's department as a deputy sheriff in San Jose, California--Santa Clara County--for six years while I finished my bachelor's degree. At that point I had taken the federal service entrance examination for the National Park Service about three years in a row, just for practice. So when I was finally eligible and had my degree, I was able to get a pretty high score on the test and was hired into the National Park Service as a ranger in September of 1966. I attended the park ranger training school in Grand Canyon for 11 weeks, and then was assigned to duties at Yosemite National Park where I primarily focused on law enforcement because of my background, but also was involved with mountain rescue, fire fighting, any number of things that rangers do. [I] had an enormous education during that one or two years of entry into the National Park Service. I'd never dealt with livestock before, and had to learn horse and mule packing and any number of things that I had absolutely no experience with. I count that as some of the best times of my life.

At the end of two years at Yosemite I took a job at Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska and became a district ranger operating a patrol boat and supervising seasonal rangers in that very large wilderness and preserve in southeast Alaska. I believe that along with the Tatshenshini Reserve in Canada, it is now the largest "set-aside" reserve in the world. I spent two years doing that, including a summer as chief ranger at Katmai [National Park] because the chief ranger became ill, and basically ran that volcanic park up there north of Kodiak for a few months. At the end of that two years I was asked to go back to Washington, D.C. and serve as a staff biologist.

[It was] the first year of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. There was no budget for the agency. A couple of the three council members knew me and were looking for someone who had some field experience because most of the staff who were working in D.C. in these fields of environment at that time were pretty much book biologists with no field experience. And so I went back there for the first year of the Council on Environmental Quality and worked on some national issues such as ocean dumping, toxic and hazardous substances, and the Public Land Law Review Commission Report.

At the end of that year the Secretary of the Interior had been fired by President Nixon and the Director of the Park Service knew he was on the short list to be sent down the road, so he gathered up all his employees with assigned or temporary jobs and shipped us all out to parks to take good care of us. His name was George Hartzog and he's my bureaucratic hero of all time. He took good care of his employees. He sent me to Haleakala National Park on Maui as superintendent. Not a bad position. I spent 3 1/2 years as superintendent of that park, worked through the wilderness hearings for the park and did quite a bit of work on restoration of native habitat and bringing back some of the endangered bird species that had been there, but were disappearing because of introduced predators and habitat changes. That was a very good experience. My children got to see some of their Hawaiian culture. I enjoyed it a lot. At the end of that 3 1/2 years I took a year off and went to Alaska where I built a cabin in the woods with my family and at the end of that year went to work for the state of Alaska as director of State Parks. [I] spent two years working for Governor [Jay] Hammond and then was called by Huey Johnson from Sacramento and asked to come down and be the director of State Parks for California during the Jerry Brown administration.

PITT: It sounds like a splendid career beginning for your work as State Parks director. When you got the call from Huey Johnson, the Resources head, how old were you?

CAHILL: Thirty-eight.

PITT: As you know, my main focus in the interviews is the parks of the Santa Monica Mountains. Anything that helps to explain the background of the early history of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is what I'm after. Let me ask you a series of questions about this. Naturally we're talking about Point Mugu and Topanga State and Malibu State, Malibu Creek, and Will Rogers State Historic. A little later I will zero in on the partnership with the National Recreation Area.

So you came from a very different environment from that adventure in Alaska when you first took office, and as I understand it you took office in April of 1977. Let me

ask you what you hoped to achieve for the State Parks as a whole and for the Southern California parks, in particular?

CAHILL: I had worked with Huey Johnson when he was the western regional director of the Nature Conservancy. He also, during that period of time when I was working in Hawaii, started the Trust for Public Land, with a couple of other people in San Francisco and I'd had quite a few land acquisition dealings with Huey on the island of Maui when the Conservancy, and later the Trust for Public Lands bought the Kipahulu Forest Preserve, which is probably one of the most valuable pieces of natural property owned by the Park Service. So when he called me, Huey was looking for someone who could manage a raucous large department, who had some experience with parks, who wasn't just a hack appointment of some kind, and he was looking for somebody who was going to convert the State Parks System from what it was into something that he and Governor Brown had some visions for, that is, more natural parks of some substance and more access to people in the urban areas of California. It was Huey's belief that the State Parks System was not fulfilling its responsibility to all the people of the state. So when I decided to take the job that was the charge that I was given and that was my primary role at that time. In addition to that, I had always felt that the Park Service and the State Parks System had a very difficult time relating to minority populations. I know from my own childhood in parks almost everyone was white and there were some fairly serious social constraints I would say against black and Asian people working in the parks. I, for instance, was the first Hawaiian to be a park ranger in the National Park System, even though the parks had been in Hawaii since 1916. It was almost like a colonial government there, and those same kind of things had evolved in the California State Parks System which has a great parallel, historically, with the National Park System, including employees from both having served in both agencies. So there was a strong charge I actually negotiated with the governor that I wanted to make an emphasis on all the people of California and that's probably why the Santa Monica Mountains became very important to me as part of a strategy to bring the State Parks System to the people of Los Angeles, Ventura, and Orange County, and as we got on with this discussion, I think you'll see how that sort of evolved from a state commitment to basically playing ball with the federal government and putting together a magnificent urban recreation area.

PITT: Now you succeeded Herb [Herbert] Rhodes.

CAHILL: That's correct.

PITT: Were you going to follow in his footsteps or were you going to do something different? What legacy did he leave to you, and what did you think of it?

CAHILL: Well, I had a fairly nasty entrance into the state government in California from the standpoint that Herb had been relieved of his duties after having only served about a year. I don't know how long he served. I can't remember. Maybe a year or two. And the secretary for resources, Huey Johnson, had taken the place--I'm trying to remember her name--she was the Sierra Club representative in California. She was Jerry Brown's first Resources secretary.

And there was a lot of dispute among environmentalists about Huey. He's a very outgoing and opinionated guy. There was a really bad feeling among minorities in the Department of Parks and Recreation because of Herb being relieved of his duties. I think he was appointed to a commission, to Employee Appeals or one of those commissions in state government. And it wasn't a happy day. I think what I saw when I came into the job was that Herb really wanted to do a good job. He probably didn't have the basic tools that had anything to do with parks when he came in. He had plenty of ability in the administrative arena, but I don't think he was very well accepted by some of the people in the department--except the minorities in the department. An awful lot of people got appointed by him. It was very easy for me to take those people on and form them into my own team. I didn't have to recruit them. Lots of blacks, Asians, and Hispanics had been appointed into exempt positions and basically I made those folks into a team and I owe Herb for that.

PITT: He held a series of meetings in Southern California, if I understand it correctly. Community meetings. Can you tell me anything about those meetings and what they may have resulted in?

CAHILL: I can't really. Herb didn't talk to me much when I took the job. There was a lot of acrimony. Not between him and me because I didn't even know him, but I think between him and Secretary Huey Johnson. But I certainly saw the result of those meetings and basically continued having quite a few meetings in Southern California. In fact, I decided that the only way to really become a presence--for the director to become a presence down there--was to hold office hours every two weeks down in Los Angeles. Actually I was down there more often than that for special reasons, hearings or whatever, but I made it a point to have two days every two weeks in the Los Angeles office and make political visits, if you will, to Los Angeles City and County, Orange County, and a number of the small cities, as well, in Southern California. Not so much in Ventura County, but the cities in Ventura County. To try to make sure they felt they were getting fair service out of the State Parks System. And we did quite a few small projects down there: Santa Monica Mountains was a big thing. But we worked on quite a few things in the Baldwin Hills and we tried to get a state recreation area going out in the Willowbrook area on some property that had [been] purchased for a big post office center but was never used for it.

PITT: That would be in South Central?

CAHILL: Yes. Supervisor Kenny [Kenneth] Hahn and I became good friends and he and I used to fly around in a helicopter looking for vacant land for state recreation areas in Southern California. It was quite an experience.

PITT: I'm going to take you back one step. Many people have talked about William Penn Mott and the Mott legacy. He was earlier, of course, [1967-1975]. But from your perspective, and maybe from your experience meeting him, what can you tell us about that era?

CAHILL: Well, Bill and I were good friends and I can tell you that one of the things I became convinced of during my time as State Parks director was that my principal role there was to see if I could finish some of the stuff that Bill Mott started. He had an ability to start ten things--I don't know whether he expected all ten of them to get accomplished, but eventually maybe three of them would, but they were three outstanding things. I had to run around cleaning up after Bill for quite a bit of time when I was down there. And when I say that I'm not saying that in a negative sense. It's just that he was a fantastic idea person and I found I was having to run around playing catch-up to make sure that some of the stuff he got started got finished, and basically, cut some other stuff out.

An example of that was the Candlestick State Recreation Area in San Francisco which was formed in a telephone call between Governor [Ronald] Reagan and Willie Brown, when he was the chairman of the Assembly finance committee. All the staffs in the early morning hours of the end of the legislative session were trying to negotiate the last things to go into the budget. And on Willie's end of the phone the staff people told me he put his hand over the phone and said, "What else do we want?" and they said, "Get a park," and he said, "Where?" and they said, "Well, how about in your district?" So he got [back] on the telephone with Governor Reagan and said, "The last thing we want is a park in my district." And the people on the other end of the line--I think Bill Mott was there as well as the finance director--said, "Willie wants a park!" and Reagan said, "Where?" I've heard this from both sides of the conversation, by the way. And they said, "In his district," and he "Well, I don't know where he's going to put it in his district but ask him how much he wants, and he just made up a number of $300 or $500, or something like that. And they said, "Is that it?" and he said, "Yes, that's it," and they said, "Okay, you can have it." (Laughter) Bill Mott purchased these old dumps and shoreline, so today San Francisco has something like six miles of shoreline tied up on the Bay side just because of that political deal.

PITT: So these were the things you had to step in and . . .

CAHILL: I had to go buy it. People had all these property rights on submerged property that no one was ever going to let them develop because of the Bay Conservation District that had come along and we had to negotiate with all these people who actually had no ability to develop their property. [It was] a political nightmare. But we got it done and there's now a very nice state recreation area including some excellent bayside habitat, really rare habitat right in the middle of Candlestick Point which is a place where they had riots not too many years ago.

PITT: I think I've seen it. (Pause while Pitt closes a door to block extraneous noise). That's a good example of the Mott era and how things were done and how you had to do them.

CAHILL: It was enjoyable. I'm not complaining at all. I found it a really rich experience to be able to come in there with Bill having brought all these ideas up--and Huey also [who] was quite an ideas person--and see if I could make it work.

PITT: Now help me understand where Governor Jerry Brown weighed in on the parks. He was a professed environmentalist and he made important appointments such as yourself, and yet, as I understand it, he let the budgets for the State Parks begin to slip including those in Southern California. I think I have that right. How do we square the circle on Jerry Brown and the parks?

CAHILL: I would differ with that interpretation. Quite a bit, actually.

PITT: Please straighten me out.

CAHILL: I was director when Prop. 13 was passed, or we had to implement it when I was director. Everyone in the government was ordered to take a major cut in their budget and bring them in personally and talk to the governor and finance director about what they planned to do to make the cuts. What I did was, I devised a plan where we would eliminate the headquarters division of the park rangers. I had a feeling that the agency was two different agencies, with the sort of traditionalists and the park ranger division running what they wanted to do regardless of what the director said, and there's a certain amount of truth to that. And so I thought, well, here's what we're going to do. We're going to have the regional director's report right to the director, and we're going to get rid of 232 positions in Sacramento and a few others in regional offices. But instead of taking those cuts--that was the total number of people that we would have had to lay off under the Prop. 13 cuts--I went to the governor and I said, "Look. You purchased and are purchasing about 16 new parks per year over the last few years. They're not staffed. They're [parks] just raw land out there that are being vandalized, and so forth. How about if I take these 232 positions, cut them out of the budget, and you give them back to me. I'll open 16 state parks on a rudimentary basis with dirt roads and unimproved camp sites and the very basics of protection and then we'll let things cook for a while and by the time 10 years or so go by we'll be able to put together a park plan knowing what people would like to do in some of these parks. He thought it was a great idea, and basically I didn't have to take a cut during Prop. 13, and some other people in the government had to make up for ours. I was persona non grata around there. (Laughter)

PITT: Was this you talking to Huey Johnson or to Jerry Brown?

CAHILL: To Jerry Brown. I've worked for six governors at one time or another in three different states and Jerry Brown is the only governor who would actually sit down with you for an extended period of time, as long as it took to understand your budget and see if it was doing the things that he wanted to be done. For instance, alternative technology--appropriate technology--you know, low-tech solutions to problems like that. And he would listen very carefully to what our plans were and he'd try to steer us in ways that he wanted. He actually paid attention to his policy issues, more so than anybody I ever worked with.

PITT: You've certainly straightened me out on that. With respect to Huey Johnson as head of the Resources Agency. You reported to him. What was your interaction with him, particularly as it pertained to the Santa Monica parks?

CAHILL: Let me give this a little thought. (Pause) At a certain point when all these budget cuts were going along, there was some pressure on us to include the State Parks into National Park areas, not only the Santa Monica Mountains, but also the Redwood National Park on the North Coast. And Huey and I sat down and had a fairly long talk and came out agreeing that we should probably cooperate with transferring these things over to the National Park System for two reasons: (1) the parks would still be providing what we provided to the public. We could certainly write plenty of that stuff into any agreements we made and (2) there would be quite a savings in the state budget which could be applied to a lot of the new parks that were coming on line. So Huey and I pretty much made the decision and then went to the governor and the state Legislature with a lot of the state to federal transfers that went on. It was not very popular within the agency and with a lot of traditionalists, including some state legislators.

PITT: You mentioned the Legislature. You seem to have had so many bosses in this job. You had to deal with the Legislature. Can you talk to me about the prime movers in the Legislature at that time, Assemblyman Howard Berman and so on, who were involved with parks issues. What was the Legislature trying to achieve?

CAHILL: I had a lot of dealings with the Legislature on a more macro level. In other words, when I took over the department, they had a $375 million bond backlog. In other words, the people of California had voted for $375 million of bonds to purchase parks and develop parks, and the department was spending about $25 million a year. So basically we were losing more money than we were spending on the basis that real estate inflation was taking place at a fairly rapid rate at that time. I think it was something like 11 percent or something. So my main function with the state Legislature was to get the finances of the department, particularly the capital finances straightened out and operating right and they were quite angry. There was a lot of acrimony and attack on the department staff and me, even though I was new. So I had a rocky road at the beginning of my tenure there. And I have to tell you that a lot of the work that had to do with the Santa Monicas, the redwoods, and others, were done by my executive staff. I had a team of deputies that were quite good. A woman named Alice Huffman was my chief deputy.

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Russ, you were talking about having a good staff. Do you want to complete that point?

CAHILL: Yes. A woman named Alice Huffman, the chief deputy director, did most of the person-to-person contact with the state Legislature and was my person at the Assembly, in particular. I had more interaction with John Garamendi in the Senate. He

was very interested in the parks. He had quite a few in his district and he wanted to talk to the director. But most of the Southern California delegation dealt with my deputy director and wanted it that way. She was quite good.

PITT: The acrimony you referred to then was to use the money that had been sitting there while the land was getting more expensive.

CAHILL: Absolutely. And there's a general tendency on the part of state legislatures, too, when they see ineptitude--and they saw quite a bit of it in the agency--to get angry with people. Then things just seem to get worse. It's not always specifically on that point but they hold a grudge, it seems like. Then the employees get their backs up and when I got down there things were in pretty tough shape and I had to do a lot of the kind of work I do to get the people back on track and headed in the right direction.

PITT: In the Assembly did you, or she, find a particular ally?

CAHILL: I think Howard Berman, in the Santa Monica Mountains issue was an ally. I tell you, the names are escaping me right now. I know she and he worked pretty hard on the state portions of that. I actually spent most of my time working with the Congress. I spent a lot of time with congressional staff because that's where the money was going to come from.

PITT: We'll come to that in a bit. Now, that was a period, the '60s and '70s, when the landowners and the land developers were pretty aggressive in the Santa Monicas. They had a lot at stake there, particularly the developers. Did you have any direct dealings with them when you came down to Southern California? Perhaps one would come to you and complain about the feds or demand some kind of relief from the state.

CAHILL: No. I think they probably figured it was a losing battle. They basically stayed away from us. We made it very clear in the beginning of that process that we were going to cooperate with the expansion on the state stuff and the transfer to the feds.

PITT: Did somebody challenge you and say, "You just want to stop all development. That's all you want to do?"

CAHILL: Probably daily.

PITT: And what was your response?

CAHILL: The population growth in the state of California was just fantastic at that point and I pointed out that the acreage of the State Parks System in California is quite small if you calculate it based on population and acreage as compared with some of the other western states. A place like Wyoming, for instance, has enormous state parks holdings compared to population. I made the point that what were we going to do when we started reaching these large numbers of population and that we were working on a strategy that would pick up the lands that are actually more expensive in the growth areas rather than

just buying remote properties that no one would ever see. In addition to that, of course, we had a major landscape plan that [William Penn] Bill Mott had put together that drove what we acquired in the rural areas in the state in, for instance, rare plant habitat, rare animal habitat, those kinds of things. The state Fish and Game Department wasn't doing that kind of thing at the time so we had basically picked that up. One benefit from that, politically, was that environmentalists in the state liked what we were doing. We had a certain amount of trust with them although it went back and forth at times (laughter) if we didn't do exactly what they wanted us to do things went tight.

PITT: Let me pursue that a little bit. The environmental organizations in the southern part of the state--I'm thinking of Susan Nelson and the Santa Monica Mountains Foundation, Margot Feuer, Jill Swift of the Sierra Club Task Force, homeowner associations that had environmental concerns--what was your take on them?

CAHILL: Well, the three individuals that you mentioned were right out of the classic mold of people who succeed in getting parks. For instance, there's a woman who just died who basically has been the driving force behind the Everglades in Florida. If you look at just about any major park you'll find--primarily women--who have been the people who did the groundwork and who stayed with it, kept the pressure on, and who worked the issues to the point where they succeeded. And those three, particularly Sue and Margot and Jill Swift--I would say those three of all the people I dealt with on these projects--those three were the activists who actually got the work done. They were very good to work with. They didn't like being crossed. None of them liked any disagreement. Basically they wanted it the way they wanted it done and I had to get crosswise with them on at least one occasion. That having to do with access to park properties, on a couple of occasions, actually. One of the things I wanted to do was [to] have some development in the parks that had camping and access to the wild areas by urban populations. I didn't want them to just be locked up wildlife preserves. I got fought at every step, every potential development.

Just a little anecdote. I visited--I think all three of those women were on a visit to Malibu Creek State Park--an old ranch site which I had thought was a good place to have camping because it had already been developed. You wouldn't have had to do clearing or any of those kinds of things; you could just fold it into around the old farm buildings. And we were out there to look at this. They were protesting it. While we were talking under this large tree I looked up in the tree and looking down at us was a nesting red-tailed hawk. With young birds in the nest. (Laughter) And they hadn't seen them yet. I just about signed the peace treaty right there. There wasn't any way we were going to build anything underneath the nesting raptors out in the area. The place had been abandoned long enough so that the wildlife had come back and taken it over. That was fine. I actually could see their point of view.

But I did have to tangle with them on transportation. All the talk about getting young people from the inner city out to the park went down the chute when we started trying to get the transit districts--I can't remember what their names were--to put bus stops up right next to the park at trail heads. People didn't want bus stops in their neighborhoods. The Sierra Club, in particular, got all over me about trying to get these bus stops in there. I went back and read to them their own rhetoric about how we have to

get these poor people out of the city and out in the rural environment and all that stuff and it was, "Yes, that's true, but put it someplace else." Kenneth Hahn told me that he wanted me to build a park. Just buy a cheap piece of property and name it "Somewhere Else Park." (Laughter) He said he was getting sick and tired of all these people telling us to "put it somewhere else." We could say, "We've already got one there."

PITT: In the field of park management, so it seems to me as a lay person, there seems to be conflict and tension as to whether it ought to be for recreation or wilderness. Am I right about that? And how do you keep that in balance?

CAHILL: It's the classic dichotomy of parks management. Let me step back one second, though, and tell you that my disputes with those folks were maybe 10 percent of my activity. The other 90 percent was very constructive. If it weren't for people like that, we wouldn't have these parks. The bureaucracy couldn't do it by itself and they represent the best of the advocates for parks that I know. The classic dichotomy goes all the way back to the 1870s when Yellowstone was set aside. A park and pleasuring ground is the way it was said. In fact, I've visited reserves and parks all over the world where the same tension exists. I've managed, since I've left the state of California, I've managed a couple of other park systems and it's always there and it doesn't make any difference whether it's pristine wilderness versus primitive camping or the intense recreation facilities that are put in tight urban areas and maybe a small path around it. The tension is always there. How do you get people to use the parks that they're paying for and at the same time protect animal and bird species, plant life, and scenic vistas, and so forth?

PITT: A perennial theme and sometimes it's solved and sometimes it isn't. Any reflection on your part about why [the activists were] mostly women?

CAHILL: I don't know about Sue. But Margot and Jill were people who had time and resources. Sue had plenty of time to work on it because she really was the most active of the three, I think. And also [she] was able to sit down and work an agreement. That is a talent you don't find often among some of the advocates. Sue is a person who could sit down at the table with you and you could make a lot of noise, everybody could make a lot of noise, but eventually you come out with something you could work with. So I guess it's the classic thing of having enough time and resource.

PITT: These conversations took place in which office? In L.A.?

CAHILL: It took place in their homes. I would visit their homes to have meetings, or they would meet in our office, or we would go out in the field and look at stuff. I actually spent a lot of very pleasant time with those folks.

PITT: In 1978, 1979, the Legislature created the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and appointed Joseph Edmiston as its director. That was right around the time you came into the administration.

CAHILL: Right.

PITT: Who actually appointed him and what was your relationship with Mr. Edmiston?

CAHILL: I didn't have much contact with him to be honest with you, and I don't really recall who appointed him. I guess maybe the secretary of Resources did. I don't have a lot of recollection of dealing with the Conservancy at the time. I'm sure that the executive staff did. One of the things about my management style is I pick the stuff I can do best and do it and assign the rest. And when I assign it I basically just get reports and don't lose a lot of time looking over people's shoulders. So that's one of the things that very likely one of my deputies dealt with on a day to day basis.

PITT: So you didn't see [the Conservancy] as a particular rivalry or particular political problem?

CAHILL: No. I had more experience dealing with conservancies than just about anybody. I'd worked with them on fund raising, large property acquisitions in the National Parks and some State Parks acquisitions as well and I certainly didn't look at them as a threat but my basic role, as I recall, that I made for myself was [to] make sure the federal legislation was done right. Don't let things get fouled up there, because if they do, you'll never get it fixed. And secondly, spend a lot of time with the general public and the advocates for the park seeing whether we could work out agreements that would move the process along. The other thing was, of course, meeting with the political leadership in Southern California to make sure they didn't spoil a good project.

PITT: You mentioned Kenny Hahn as one of those leaders. What about other supervisors? Did you have any luck with some of the others?

CAHILL: What's the fellow's name who was the football player? He's an older guy. I think he was once a football star [Los Angeles City Councilman John Ferraro]. I had some dealings with him. I spent quite a bit of time with Mayor Bradley on various State Parks issues in Southern California. He was very interested in the Santa Monica Mountains. Not from the standpoint of contributing any money to it, but seeing what value it could have for the population.

PITT: Tell me a little more about that. What was the city's stake in it? What was Tom Bradley's interest?

CAHILL: He was very interested in seeing places that could be destinations for people in the city, particularly those people who didn't have a car. He was fascinated by the idea of having transit to a large urban park. And we had quite a few other options around Los Angeles County and Orange and Ventura. We have lots of parks down there that work. Popular destinations for people in the Los Angeles Basin, both in rapid transit and in the car, so it isn't anything new. What I remember discussing with him was the magnitude of the thing. How valuable that would be, [a] major resource right there available to the people of the city of Los Angeles.

PITT: You came in with a notion of making the parks accessible to people from the central city, minorities, and poor families. You were in the wake of the Watts Riot of 1965. I know that back in '65, '67, Mott was trying to respond to that.

CAHILL: Right.

PITT: And you were mentioning that Herb Rhodes tried also to broaden the ethnic makeup of the parks' users. Let's focus on that a little bit. In 1978 you established several programs to involve minority youngsters and their families. One was the Urban Interpretative and the other was the Urban Action Team. Could you tell me a little bit about each of those?

CAHILL: The latter I can tell you a little bit about. The former I can't remember.

PITT: I just remember about the former, the interpretative program was to link education with work. That is, education about the environment with work opportunities. And the second one--well, you were about to tell me about that.

CAHILL: One of the things I looked at when I got down there was that there were a whole bunch of programs going on and there wasn't any coordination to it. So if you want to get something done there are two ways to do it. One was throw everything out and start over, which in California means that you'll be dead before you ever get it finished. The other way to do it is to see if you can convert what's out there into what you want. So we took a look at the Job Corps, the California Conservation Corps. There were like seven programs that we pulled into--I guess it was called Urban Interpretation but the names don't matter too much--but they were trying to get people out working in the parks and get them some training on the environment while they're there so they can take that back to wherever they'll be next whether it's going to school or whatever job they're in. And in addition to that, we could recruit the cream of the crop out of there if we were lucky and get a more diverse work force in the state which was rapidly becoming much more diverse than any place I'd ever worked except Hawaii.

PITT: And so, as you say, with using some federal funds, using some programs that existed and making them work for you.

CAHILL: What was the second?

PITT: The second was the Urban Action Team where you were trying to involve the private sector at the local level among the municipalities and with the counties. Does that ring a bell?

CAHILL: Yes. I'm trying to remember some of the Southern California stuff and I'm having a hard time with it because I grew up in Northern California and remember all that stuff in great detail. But I know that in many of the communities what I did was put together some landscape architects--Arturo Camacho and Judy Chan and some others. There were some young, non-white employees in the department who were chomping at

the bit to work on some of this. I put some teams together that would go out and work on individual projects. And I told them, "Look, if we get three or four things done in this process and then someone changes the program or gets rid of the money, as long as those three or four things are good things that will last for a long time, that's satisfactory to me. You don't have to change the world." They loved that. I'm trying to think of the name of a community that's in East Los Angeles County near Orange County. We had a program going where there was some vacant property that the state had out there that these folks cranked up into an urban recreation area. But the ones I remember most were actually in Northern California and in the migrant camps. We actually designed play facilities for migrant worker camps, mostly in the Central Valley where the children had no access and there wasn't any Park and Recreation Department to do it. So we did the design and then raised money through the private sector to build them.

PITT: So you saw a payoff for some of the initiatives you were responsible for?

CAHILL: During that same time, also--this is parenthetical but just to tell you what was going on then--we built that railroad museum in Sacramento, which was a political football when I came into it. In my career I count that probably as the best project I ever got finished.

PITT: And it is wonderful. I saw it last month again.

CAHILL: We brought that in on budget and at the same time we were working on the restoration of the state Capitol when they were reconstructing to earthquake standards. We had to do all the historical reproduction and restoration work.

PITT: I think the restoration is a beautiful job.

CAHILL: The interesting thing there was we built the railroad museum on time and under budget, and the Legislature didn't trust us to handle the other project. They had like a 500 percent cost overrun on all the stuff they did. (Laughter)

PITT: Now, I'm looking at a photograph in Joseph Engbeck's history of the State Parks.[2] I don't know if you recall that, page 128. It shows you addressing a large crowd of people at a luncheon at Big Basin, May 1978. You're celebrating the 50th anniversary of the State Parks. I think it was there that you might have announced some of these initiatives. Can you remember anything about that event?

CAHILL: Yes. I do. When I was a child my parents took me to Big Basin State Park. And my mother had gone there when she was a child. In fact, she had worked there as a maid when she was a teenager. I remember as a child looking at these historical pictures of David Starr Jordan and the people who were behind the State Parks System. He was the president of Stanford at the time. They were celebrating the formation of the California Redwoods Park--which was called Big Basin at that time--by having a big picnic. So when the governor said, "What do you want to do for your 50th birthday," I

[2] Joseph H. Engbeck, Jr., *State Parks of California from 1864 to the Present* (1980),

said, "Let's have a big picnic." The fellow who owned the Nut Tree Inn was a former State Parks commissioner and he catered this huge deal. We had this gigantic picnic with ex-Governor [Edmund Gerald (Pat)] Brown as well as, at the time, present Governor [Edmund Gerald (Jerry)] Brown, [Jr.] and the children of [the late Governor Earl] Warren showed up, and ex-State Parks directors and state park workers. The big thing I missed was the retired park rangers. [They] apparently had a big camp out the night before and all got drunk and fell in the creek or something and didn't do sleeping. It's probably a good thing I missed that part.

PITT: I see you standing under a tree. You've got a big beard and you're addressing a huge throng. They're sitting down and having a nice picnic. It's a bright sunny day.

CAHILL: It was a wonderful day.

PITT: That was from a child's dream?

CAHILL: Yes. And Newton [B.] Drury was there just prior to his becoming ill and dying. He gave a short speech. He wasn't in very good health. He was a former director of both the National Park Service and the State Parks of California. He gave a little speech and we dedicated a big oil painting that had been commissioned. I think [it] hangs in the Big Basin Park. It was a big day. The governor gave a little speech, too.

PITT: I can see how it would be. You mentioned Proposition 13 early on, the Jarvis-Gann initiative. How did it affect the parks, especially the Southern California parks? You did mention one way that you adjusted. Did it have a continuing negative effect as many agencies of the state, or localities complained? It worked to help keep people retirees and elderly people in their homes, they said, but that it ate away at some of the institutions and good things about government that we had.

CAHILL: In order to really tote up the results of [Proposition 13], you have to take a longer look at what's happened to government financing. I had a nice talk with Don Murphy when he was director, as well as a couple of other guys who had worked there since I was there. I don't know who's director now, but Murphy was at the time. They seemed to think that the sort of reactionary, conservative movement in state government was much more damaging than the results of Prop. 13. By the same token, I've looked at taxpayer initiatives and laws that have been passed in several states because of some work I've done here, and the long term thing is, you get eroded very slowly and you don't realize how bad things are until quite a bit of time goes by. People have a tendency to not keep good track of their resources and government programs have so much baloney connected to them that no one really counts the same year after year, so you don't have a good idea of what's happened until it's too late. All of a sudden you discover you have half the staffing you used to have. Now to put it in perspective, my last job before I retired was as deputy director of the State Parks System here in Washington. And I can tell you that California has at least two to three times the resources per park and per visitor that Washington State does. This is <u>really</u> a poverty pocket. It's all

relative. The National Park Service is always squawking about their staffing, and yet they have two or three times the staffing that any state [has].

PITT: Russ, you mentioned visiting other cities of Southern California. I was wondering about the responses you got [from them]; let's say Calabasas or Westlake Village or Ventura. How did they perceive you and these initiatives and the State Parks at the time?

CAHILL: I think they perceived it pretty well, although I got into a lot of really strong battles down there. Once you start coming in with the bucks and showing that you're willing to do something in Southern California (laughing) there's quite a bit of competition for the money. Everyone wanted their particular project. I think one of the bigger things we did down there was we purchased the land between the ocean and the top of the first hills of the coast range between Laguna Beach and--[is it] Newport Beach?

PITT: Yes.

CAHILL: And that was an enormous undertaking. That's one of the places where I spent a lot of time with the developers which were the--the big ranch corporation?

PITT: Irvine?

CAHILL: Yes. Irvine Ranch. We bought that property from them. It was the largest single value acquisition that state had ever . . .

End of Tape 1, Side B

Beginning of Tape 2, Side A

PITT: Russ, you were talking about the purchase of the Irvine property.

CAHILL: Right. I think we spent $42 million on that if my memory serves me. It was the only open mile of coastline between the Mexican border and Malibu. So basically, we tied up the last piece. It had development rights on it already. In fact, my understanding is that after I was gone the state sold the toilet hook-up rights for something like $6 million to some other developers in Orange County that [traded] them just like a commodity, in order to hook up to the regional sewer system and got back some of the cash that was paid for the property. We did a lot of smaller projects around Southern California but I'm probably only remembering the big ones.

We also had quite a few discussions with the people on the coast along the Malibu and Topanga area and one of the things I remember I got rid of the houses on Topanga State Beach that had [been blocking] access to the beach. The only thing I can remember that Governor Brown took issue with me on--(laughing) well, not the only thing but the

only one of any relevance here--was that he didn't think I should get rid of the houses. [There was] a housing shortage in Southern California. I told him that we had paid $6 million or so for the beach frontage and that the general public wasn't able to use it because of the social barriers that were put up by the people who lived in the homes. So that was a major battle down there and I recall on Christmas seeing myself portrayed as Simon Legree. Television pictures of people with their children in their pajamas standing on the porch saying, "We're being thrown out by the State Parks director at Christmas." [laughter]

PITT: So it did go your way.

CAHILL: Yes, it did. And every time I see Jerry Brown he reminds me that he still thinks I was wrong. But he still [let me] do it, to his credit.

PITT: The State Parks Commission. I'm wondering. You must have had something to do with commissioners from Southern California. Any remembrances of them?

CAHILL: Oh, yes. [The singer] Helen Reddy was one of the commissioners. Every place we went the television cameras would be there. She was still a very popular entertainer. She may still be. I don't know. Jim Whitehead, the former State Parks ranger was a real gentleman. I think [he] lived in Southern California. I asked the governor to appoint him because he would make a great commissioner, and also to rebuild torn relations with the state park rangers. Victoria Aranjo, I guess she was from Fresno. Robert Trent Jones, Jr., the golf club designer, was on the commission at the time, as well.

PITT: Going back a step. About the transportation issue. How did that resolve itself? I gather you did not get the bus stops.

CAHILL: I lost.

PITT: How did that affect the access of people without cars and people from the central city?

CAHILL: My own opinion is that it limited it. But these things don't all take place at once. It's conceivable that the National Park Service has organized something better. I don't know. I haven't followed up on it. But I remember that as a chalk-up in the loss column. (Laughter)

PITT: Now I come to the theme more directly--you've touched on it in some ways--of the partnership between California State Parks and Recreation and the National Park Service up there in the recreation area. I'll go back a step to the earlier part of the 1970s when the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, a part of the Interior Department, recommended that the federal government improve its [support] of the state. This was a study of recreation in the Santa Monicas, but not a try to establish a national recreation area. And then in 1978, right around the time you come in, Congress decides the issue by

establishing a national recreation area. Did you have a strong way one way or another about it happening that way?

CAHILL: I had a strong feeling that it was a good idea. Because I could recognize by having worked in the National Park System the resources that the federal government would bring to bear. And because in the 1970s the federal government was wanting to do some things to help the city and the urban areas of the country, I thought the timing was just right. And so I spent a lot of my time going back to D.C. and working in the offices of Phil Burton, the chair of the Interior Subcommittee On National Parks to make sure that any legislation that was coming down the pike that would put these two things together into a national recreation area would (1) get the job done, (2) take care of the employees that were involved in any transfers, and make the transition work.

PITT: So you took a proactive role. Do you remember when you first learned that this was seriously going to happen?

CAHILL: No, I don't remember when it was, but I assumed when the things started that that's the way it would move because Mr. Burton was the guy they used to call the "Park Barrel." He would get his enormous park bill--it would have like 300 or 400 items--through the Congress, and they generally would move on the first vote. If you look at the Americans for Democratic Action, the liberal list that the Conservatives always throw out, he was at least in the top three and voting as a liberal every year. But you'd see his bill come up and Conservatives would stand up for it. One of the things I remember was he used to organize the agriculture [caucus]. He'd go out and he'd manage an agriculture bill for the Southeastern United States. And he'd take it through and work it, and work hard at it, and then when his park bills would come up somebody from Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee would be at each door and when all of their members would come in that person would say, "This is Phil's ag bill."

PITT: Phil had probably never seen a cow in his life.

CAHILL: Oh, he'd seen a few in Marin County, I think. But he had this as part of a package of things he wanted to get done, and its quid pro quo for [Barry] Goldwater, Jr., and [Anthony C.] Beilenson, and [Robert J.] Lagomarsino--all those guys working this bill for him. They got what they wanted. He tied up the northern coast of California from about 15 miles south of Golden Gate almost to the Oregon border in national recreation areas, a national park, Point Reyes National Seashore. It's just astounding when you look at it. But that was his turf, and the way he got all that done, he considered he'd got it done for his district, but to take care of everybody else's stuff. And I actually think, in my opinion, the reason the Santa Monica stuff succeeded and came out so well was because he was managing those bills and he had control of it. All these guys would go into his office and cut the deals with him. It was just straight politics. And it was as well done as I've ever seen it.

PITT: And where does--and we'll stop and take each person separately--Anthony Beilenson fit, Robert Lagomarsino, Barry Goldwater?

CAHILL: Well, all of them, one way or another, advocated for this park. They had strong bi-partisan constituent pressure for it, and I think they believed it was the right thing to do. I've talked to all three of them at one time or another, and while they weren't experts in parks and stuff, they could see the value of it. And as long as the thing did not turn into some big fiasco [like] a major battle over the development of the park and stuff like that, they were all on board. It was a bi-partisan love fest as far as I could see. I think I mentioned to you Cleve Pinnix. (Machine is turned off for a few moments)

PITT: I'm sorry. I'm interrupting just to explain to the tape that you and I talked while the tape was off. Pick it up from there, please.

CAHILL: Okay. Cleve and I joined the National Park Service together and we're very close friends. At one point in his career he went on an Interior Department training program to work for the House of Representatives for one year and he ended up staying for eight years. For about four of those years he was the chief Democratic staff person on the National Parks Subcommittee. I recall Cleve working nights, early mornings, to make sure the language was straight on this bill, organizing field hearings on the Santa Monica Mountains bills. As far as I could tell, he was one of the principal architects of what came out. Burton would come up with the ideas, and would drink quite a bit of vodka in the evening while he was giving orders to the staff on what to do, and then the staff would stay up half the night writing the bills and the language. And that's basically the way a lot of that got done. I think that the politics of that were very difficult, but when you had the arch-liberals on one side and the Southern California conservative delegation on the other--perhaps with the exception of Dannemeyer I think he's the only guy in the United States that never got anything out of Burton. (Laughter) It's bound to move. It was timing as well as anything else.

PITT: Did Jerry Brown ever personally express any views to you about the NRA [National Recreation Area] specifically? About whether it was a good or a bad thing?

CAHILL: I just remember briefing him on it and basically being given the go-ahead. But he didn't spend a lot of time talking to me about it. One of the things about him is he stuck to his agenda. When you'd go in his office he'd always bring up the things he wanted to bring up. I've often considered him the best governor I ever worked for, the main reason being that he had a strategy and a policy for what he wanted to do and he stuck with it.

PITT: Robert Chandler, the first superintendent for the Recreation Area, in an interview with me, he said that he thought that Jerry Brown had neglected the Santa Monica Mountains. He said he had a photograph of himself shaking a finger at Jerry Brown, and telling him to show greater interest. Here's a quote from the interview with Bob Chandler. "We didn't have a whole lot of support from Jerry Brown. I remember meeting with Jerry Brown one day. I still have a picture where I'm pointing my finger at him, encouraging him to be more active in supporting the NRA." So what's that all about?

CAHILL: I don't know to be honest with you. I remember the first day Bob was on the job and opened up an office out in Ventura County someplace. I went down and talked with him. He and I have had lots of dealings on park issues over the last 20, 30 years, and I have a lot of respect for him. But I didn't recall that kind of conversation. What I remember about the governor was what I said. If he didn't have a direct interest in stuff, he'd delegate it. And as far as I can tell, the state's role in that was delegated to Huey and me.

PITT: Since you were in the National Park Service at one time you'd be in a particularly good position to answer: Did Chandler and his planning team do a good job?

CAHILL: I think they did an excellent job. Bob himself talked to me quite often trying to make sure he wasn't stepping on our toes and that the thing was going to work. That was what we both pledged to do--make it work. I think they did an excellent job.

PITT: He was fearful. He said that he recognized that people were fearful around Southern California that the feds would take over, so obviously that was never a fear that you had. You immediately saw what was going to happen. In fact, you worked on it beforehand, I imagine, to make it work.

CAHILL: Yes. And I have to say that my only worry was that there wouldn't be exclusions. People bought the State Parks. Some of the properties were purchased, I think, back in the '20s when some of the first bond issues ever issued by the state of California for parks. It seemed to me there was a trust involved there that had to do with access to the parks. My main concern was that the National Park Service not lock it up. It was called a recreation area, but in fact, there was a lot of pressure to make it into a wilderness area. And so we had quite a few discussions about that and my feeling was that the planning team did a darned good job of trying to balance those things. There was a lot of pressure.

PITT: You were on the scene at some point when James Watt in the Reagan presidential administration made a very bold move to de-activate the National Recreation Area, and to turn it over to the state, disassemble the federal unit and turn it over to you, presumably. Did you get any direct personal hint of this going on? And if so, what was your take on Mr. Watt?

CAHILL: Well, I think he was a disaster. But at the same time this was going on, I had gone through two years of organizing to turn over some of the state's most valuable parks up in the redwoods zone to the National Park Service. Prairie Creek Redwood State Park and some of those. I had gone through a process of negotiating with three unions, getting special legislation for the people's retirement system so they could go to work on the federal side, and at the last minute, after having all this work done and budgetary transfers made, the National Parks director, at a public meeting up in Northern California with me in attendance said, "We're not going to take it." This was after commitments had been made and everything else. I had to go back and undo all that stuff legislatively. Go back and explain to all these people [to whom] I had made the arguments in the opposite

direction, why we now couldn't do it, and [to] get the money back in the state budget, which wasn't easy at that time. I was very disappointed with Bill Whalen who was the National Park director at the time in having done that. So I was obviously wary of the same thing happening in the Santa Monicas.

PITT: And this was in the Watt era during the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion era?

CAHILL: I'm not sure. Do you have a date on when Watt was talking about this?

PITT: I probably could find it.

CAHILL: I'm not sure to be honest with you. I can't remember

PITT: But you already had been burned, and you were cautious.

CAHILL: Well, [Jimmy] Carter was the president then, and so I think that Cecil Andrus was the secretary.

PITT: Under Carter.

CAHILL: Yes. And I left in '81.

PITT: But you saw, in general, that the stewardship of the Park Service was a good thing in the southern region there, throughout the mountains, and that the Park Service was bringing some value, and maybe taking a little bit of the burden off of the state.

CAHILL: Yes. The federal government certainly had a presence there with the Angeles National Forest. I mean, there's an awful lot of wild land recreation that goes on, on federal lands down there, but the National Park Service provides an additional dimension to the park and recreation scene, both in preservation and active recreation stuff. It just seemed to me here's the big population of the United States growing by leaps and bounds, that they should be in there. When you go out and look at that place--I had to go and make the arguments with some congressmen and quite a few other people about why it should be of national caliber, and I had to go tell those people, "Look, you have to be out there to see this. You have to be out there on a foggy morning in Southern California at the times when that is some of the most beautiful coastal land that you've ever seen." And the little valleys that were protected, largely by ranchers but somewhat by State Parks ownership for quite a bit of time, had enormous value, not only for the people who live around it but the people of the country. And I made the arguments because I believed them. And I think in some ways [I] was successful in helping move that thing along.

PITT: Can you remember your first involvement in the Santa Monicas, when you first really took a look at what the assets were, and its beauty, and the biology of it.

CAHILL: I can tell you that what I did was get a lot of materials together when I first went to work down there because it looked like there was going to be one of those

principle issues that I'd have to deal with. There were enormous numbers of old and new studies that had been done about the area, both when the state purchased properties and all the stuff that had gone into the push for the Santa Monica Mountains at the time. And so I did a lot of book work before I went down and [had] pretty good knowledge of the value of the ecosystems, what kinds of vegetation associations and animal and bird populations were there. Once I got out there I was struck by how you could get away from that urban crap in such short order by going up a dirt road or taking a hike of a half mile and all of a sudden you were in perhaps what some of the first western observers in California saw.

PITT: It's interesting. Bob Chandler said he had that same experience of going up from the [San Fernando] Valley side and being first in the middle of this dense urban scene, and then very quickly transitioning into the wilderness where he could hear the birds and not the city. That was a very striking thing to him. I've been flipping some pages here and I see that Reagan was inaugurated in January of '81 and appointed Watt as Interior secretary. And I'm not sure what the public manifestation was, but that he was beginning to maneuver to "divest" all the National Recreation Areas. That would have been Cuyahoga and Indiana Dunes and Santa Monica Mountains, and so on.

CAHILL: Yes. He didn't succeed.

PITT: Right. By way of conclusion, I have several questions. You were mentioning some of the other State Parks staff people who worked behind the scenes, maybe day by day, and didn't get credit. What about telling me some of those names and maybe the manager--was there one manager who had responsibility for the four parks on a day-to-day basis? And anyone else you care to mention. Maybe people who were working in Sacramento, as well.

CAHILL: There was a guy named Richard Felty (F-e-l-t-y) who was assistant director for Southern California and his job was sort of ambassador without portfolio. He didn't have direct management authority over the parks in Southern California. There was a regional office that dealt with [those] folks but Dick was my eyes and ears in Southern California and spent a lot of time dealing with Sue Nelson and Jill Swift and Margot Feuer and lots of the people down there. He was out almost every night working with the neighborhood groups, and so forth. I would say he was the principal staff person who had knowledge of it and who made things work. Then there were two [others]. I mentioned Alice Huffman on the side, but there were two other guys who had the same job actually. One of them agreed to come to work for me just for a year to straighten some things out and then the other guy took it over. One of them is Steve Steinhour who was my deputy for acquisition and development. He was an attorney for the Trust for Public Land when I hired him. I needed to get somebody in to get the development program on track. Then I hired Neil Johanson who was my park planner in Alaska to come down and head up engineering, planning, acquisition, and development. He stayed with it. He did an excellent job on the projects we had, the four parks down there. [He] later became the State Parks director in Alaska.

PITT: And did these folks work with Chandler and his team?

CAHILL: Yes.

PITT: So there were experts in land planning and program development that were working from both sides.

CAHILL: Yes. I'd say the National Park Service put most of the money into it, but we did a lot.

PITT: When you look back, particularly on those initiatives for access for inner city kids and so on, are you happy with what was accomplished?

CAHILL: I'd have to look at it today to be fair, because I know these things take time, and I really haven't taken a look at it in a long time. I would hope that access programs have actually worked to the benefit of children in the area because there's so many of them and there's such great need for getting people excited about the environment. But I really don't know what's happened.

PITT: I will tell you this much. In an interview with Arthur Eck, the current superintendent, he's very alert to that and very much concerned with that. I'll put it this way: What advice about those programs would you give him without knowing anything else about the current situation?

CAHILL: Don't let the NIMBYs [Not in My Back Yard] keep you from doing it, and be like a bulldog and stay after it or it'll never happen.

PITT: State Parks people have complained, and probably with good reason, that the State Parks have suffered from neglect in the last 16 years or so. If you agree with that, what has happened to the Santa Monica state parks in the subsequent governorships as far as you can tell?

CAHILL: I really can't tell. I've been fully engaged up here. About the only time I've been in the state was [when] I took a job for six months about four years ago as the manager [shifting] the Presidio of San Francisco from the army to Park Service [control]. But I haven't spent any time down there looking at what the results have been. I do know that some state parks that I have followed down there are in pretty tough shape and they've had a lot of political neglect plus some really stupid things have been done like raising the rates to the point where people won't stay there any more. It's crazy. Actually the Legislature should be delegating, and the governor should be delegating the management of those things as an enterprise rather than some kind of a screwy political revenge mission. (Laughter) That's what it looked like to me. But I don't know what's happened specifically in the Santa Monicas.

PITT: I ask some of the people I'm interviewing whether they have a favorite book about the environment, or the work they do, or about parks, that influenced them the most. And I'll ask you that.

CAHILL: That's tough. I had a lot of book influences. There's a little paperback book that's hard to find that's called *Islands of Hope* by Bill Brown and I think the National Recreation and Parks Association published it. He's a historian in Alaska and when I read that little book it just sort of jelled the philosophy that has driven me to do this kind of work for so long. And I think that is probably one of the most influential books I've read.

PITT: I'm going to get it out and read it. I'm creating a little list for my own [edification] if for no one else's. Why did you leave office?

CAHILL: My first wife, who was my high school sweetheart, had leukemia, and she started getting worse and worse, and I had this bad dream that I would be in the Holiday Inn in Los Angeles when she died, so [I left].

End of Tape 2, Side A

Beginning of Tape 2, Side B

PITT: Please pick up on your thought, if you can.

CAHILL: I went to the governor and told him that I was going to resign, and basically spend a year, or whatever time it took, to take care of my wife and my children--I had one kid still at home--so I resigned and moved to Cayucos down near San Luis Obispo and rented a beach house and basically nursed for a year and took care of my wife. She actually got a little bit better for a short time. At the end of that year I was out of resources and took a job as a state forester in Washington state and came up here. She managed to hold on for about another year. So I've been up here working. She passed away in 1982. I've been up here working ever since.

PITT: How sad. How sad for her and for you. So your kids are grown.

CAHILL: One of them is a seasonal ranger in Glacier Bay National Park, and the other two live in town here and I have four grandchildren in Olympia.

PITT: That's the best part right there.

CAHILL: I'm pretty lucky.

PITT: Yes. I'm glad of that. I want to thank you very kindly.

CAHILL: You're welcome.

PITT: And if you have anything else you want to say, you can say it now, or perhaps you can call me and we can add [it].

CAHILL: Let me give you just one more recollection.

PITT: Please.

CAHILL: During World War II I lived--my dad was overseas and I had a bunch of sisters--and we lived with my mom in coastal San Mateo County south of San Francisco. We lived in a community where there were only about 14 houses and were surrounded by these rolling foothills. Very similar in aspect to what I saw in the Santa Monica Mountains, and I know that, living there as a boy and being pretty much on your own. During the war there wasn't a lot of money being spent on recreation, I just wandered those hills as a small child. I know that when I went down to the Santa Monica Mountains I had this funny feeling I'd been there before.

PITT: How interesting. Where were you?

CAHILL: In a place called--well, it's now called Pacifica. And there are probably 15,000 homes visible from where my house was where there were 14 homes at the time. And what I remember was the smell of the artemesia and the sage and the different things that grow, buck brush and so forth along those canyons. And when I went down there I remember I could have had a blindfold on and I could have told you where I was as far as an eco region.

PITT: Nice experience. Again, I want to thank you for allowing me to question you this way.

CAHILL: You're very welcome.

PITT: And for your very candid and illuminating remarks. You filled in a very important gap here from the State Parks perspective and I'm particularly grateful.

End of Tape 2, Side B

End of Interview

— III —

A VOICE FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

An Interview with Anton Calleia

Anton Calleia served on the board of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy as the designee of Tom Bradley, Mayor of the City of Los Angeles. He was interviewed on August 25, 1998 at California State University, Northridge.

Interviewee: Anton Calleia
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: Anton, would you please describe your background briefly--where you were born, where you were educated, and the jobs you held prior to 1980 and later, and perhaps what you do now. We would appreciate that as a general background.

CALLEIA: I was born on the island of Malta on July 18, 1933. I went through secondary school in Malta, and migrated to the United States in 1950. I came directly to California to live with an uncle in Brentwood in the Santa Monica Mountains. Because I had academic deficiencies in American history and practical arts, before I could go to the university I went back to high school, to University High School for two semesters. I was graduated from University High School in West Los Angeles. From there I went to Santa Monica College for a year, then I dropped out. I went to work in the field advertising department of Procter & Gamble.

The Korean War was on; and, leaving college, I lost my student deferment from the draft. I was drafted in June 1953, granted U.S. citizenship in December 1953, and after basic training and Army Field Forces Leaders Course at Fort Ord, California, served 14 months in Germany. Upon discharge from active service, I returned to Santa Monica College and obtained my B.A. in journalism from California State College Los Angeles. During my junior year, I was hired full-time by the morning *Los Angeles Examiner* and worked there until January 1962 when the paper was merged with its afternoon Hearst sister, the *Herald-Express*, to form the *Herald-Examiner*. In 1962 I worked briefly for the Missile and Space Systems Division of Douglas Aircraft, the Santa Monica Evening Outlook, and ended up as a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* where I stayed through June, 1965.

Beginning in July, 1965, I served as deputy to then-newly elected Councilman Marvin Braude. I stayed with Braude through his re-election in the municipal primary in the spring of 1969, then took a leave of absence to work on the mayoral campaign of then-Councilman Tom Bradley. After that campaign, which he lost, Bradley asked me to join his staff as deputy and press secretary. I also did some speech writing for him. I left his staff in 1972 to go to work for the city's Chief Legislative Analyst. There I worked on budget matters and helped draft the city's first environmental guidelines pursuant to the California Environmental Protection Act (CEQA). When Bradley was elected mayor in

1973 he asked me to join his administration, and I was hired by Bradley and stayed with him for 20 years as his chief administrative assistant and, ultimately, chief executive assistant, with primary responsibility for the budget and as liaison to the City Council. I retired from the city one month after Bradley. I served on Mayor [Richard] Riordan's transition team. I retired at the end of July, 1993.

PITT: A good beginning. You were associated with the Santa Monica Conservancy from its first meeting in May, 1980, as nearly as I can tell, until 1994. You were a member first of the advisory committee from 1980 to 1982, and then you became a member of the board itself, and you served, as you already indicated, until 1994. Why don't you give us an overview of your participation with the Conservancy, taking as much time as you want. When you are finished, I will ask you some specific questions.

CALLEIA: Well, when the Conservancy was first created, the city of Los Angeles did not have a representative on the board, but it did have a representative on the advisory committee and I asked Mayor Bradley to appoint me to the advisory committee. I stayed on that advisory committee until the legislation was changed to create a seat for a representative of the city of Los Angeles. When that happened, the mayor appointed me to that seat. That appointment had to be confirmed by the City Council, and I was confirmed by the City Council. I was replaced on the advisory board by Jerome Daniel.

PITT: Please tell us about your further participation right down until the very end.

CALLEIA: My participation ultimately, apart from the specific goals of the legislation, I think stemmed from the fact that, from my point of view, the mountains were being devastated by subdivisions. We had a unique asset, a natural resource here, which we were squandering, and that unless we did something about it, it was not going to be [there] anymore for future generations. I felt that the Conservancy could be a very useful instrument for acquiring land and at the same time making the public aware that this rampant development in the mountains was destroying what was, in fact, a unique national resource.

The Conservancy as originally conceived, at least my understanding of it, was to seize opportunities to acquire land for conservation and public recreation purposes at times when the National Park Service did not have money appropriated by the Congress. So the original charge of the Conservancy was to acquire land and hold it until it could turn it over to an operating agency. The Conservancy did not have a responsibility to manage land, only to hold it, but because funding to these operating agencies, such as the National Park Service and the State Department of Parks and Recreation, was very limited; and the state agency particularly was not very eager to acquire additional responsibility. And so, the Conservancy, of necessity, became a manager of land. We took care of that by creating one very important joint-powers agency, that is, the Mountain Recreation Conservation Authority, which has served the Conservancy very well as a managing agency. They provide not only development funds, but also security and rangers, and that sort of thing, as well as a good educational program.

Also, the problem in the mountains--and when I talk about the mountains I refer to the entire range essentially from Elysian Park all the way to the Oxnard plain, and

from the coastline inland to roughly Highway 101--[is that] you have a multitude of local jurisdictions. Even though some of them appreciated the value of these mountains there was no coordinated effort. Well, the Conservancy was a good instrument essentially to develop some cooperative arrangements. For instance, the Conservancy could not grant funds to an agency that had not adopted a mountain development plan that was consistent with the Conservancy's goals of conservation, and so on. I was fortunate in that the city of Los Angeles was always in conformance during my tenure on the board with the slope density ordinance in the mountains, with the Mulholland Corridor Protection legislation, and so on.

I feel very good about what the Conservancy has been able to do and continues to be able to do. Needless to say, with hindsight, there were things that probably the Conservancy could have done better, or perhaps should not have done at all. Keep in mind that while the constituency of the Conservancy was largely environmentalist and conservationist, there were also people who supported the Conservancy who had less altruistic reasons for doing so. And I refer, without condemning them, to homeowner groups in the mountains who essentially did not want further development in their backyard. My personal feeling [was] I didn't care about their motives as long as they helped the goal of the Conservancy. In political terms, and I don't know whether this is useful to you, I have always felt that less sophisticated citizens are always very straightforward about their self-interest, whereas the better-educated people always state their interest in altruistic, if not transcendentalist, terms. But that's an aside.

PITT: Do you want to say more or shall I [go on]?

CALLEIA: No. Basically that was my involvement. One opportunity that I had, I think was unique and significant, [was] one day when I was working for Bradley, a gentleman who was raising money for the Los Angeles Council of the Boy Scouts of America came to see the mayor and afterwards dropped by my office. He was telling me how the Boy Scout Council owned a magnificent piece of land, but they were otherwise very poor in terms of operating funds. He told me that the Circle X Ranch, which they used for camping and all sorts of recreation for the Boy Scouts, would probably have to be sold to get some operating funds. I remember going to Circle X Ranch when I belonged to a Boy Scout troop in West L.A. and I remembered it very, very well. I said, "Don't sell it for development. We'll buy it from you." And he said, "Who is we"? And I said, "The Conservancy." And to make a long story short, the Conservancy was able to come up with the money, buy the property, which meant that the Boy Scouts, along with everybody else, could still use it, and essentially kept it out of subdivision and development. I'm very proud of that part, even though my boss, Tom Bradley, jokingly told Governor [Pete] Wilson that I had exceeded my authority. I didn't. I just brought it to the attention of the Conservancy and the staff who ran with it.

PITT: Which raises the question, How interested was the mayor personally in mountain issues and how free were you to make your own decisions? Were you obliged to check with him, or to see what the city's interest would be regardless of how you felt?

CALLEIA: Well, I always felt obliged to tell the mayor what I was doing. However, he never dictated to me what I ought to do. I understood my responsibility on the board as representing all the people of California and not just the city of Los Angeles. I did disagree with official city policy on one issue and I'm grateful that Tom Bradley did not remove me for that. The city of Los Angeles had entered into an agreement with the county to take Elsmere Canyon in Santa Clarita and make a landfill dump out of it. I believed that was an outrageous suggestion because Elsmere Canyon is a beautiful pristine canyon, and not only that, the Los Angeles aqueduct is under it. I thought apart from destroying the wildlife there, there was also a danger of contaminating the water supply of the city. But the city was under pressure to close Lopez Canyon as a dump. The possibility of use of Mission Canyon, Sullivan and Rustic canyons as dumps in the Santa Monica Mountains had pretty much been determined as being impossible, and so they had to find someplace else to take the trash. Elsmere looked like a very attractive, close-in location. I could not support it. As you know, it would have required an exchange of land with the forest service, and the Congressman out in Santa Clarita, Buck McKeon, put a rider on a bill one day which essentially prohibited the exchange, and that was the end of it.

Also, and this does not necessarily contradict the policy of the city of Los Angeles, I also felt that unless the city was really forced to reduce the volume of material it was burying, it would never do it; because it is always the path of least resistance, and the bureaucracy--and I don't use that word in a pejorative way necessarily--will not innovate, [i.e.] try anything new, because by habit they do what comes easiest for them. And I think the pressure that resulted from the closure of these landfills has forced the city to undertake a serious recycling program, which I think it is doing now. It has reduced the volume of trash that is buried very dramatically. No paper or recyclable material goes into these landfills any more, and all garden cuttings, and other biodegradable stuff is composted. I don't know to what extent one can take credit for, or rather give credit to, the closure of landfills for an improved recycling effort, but I think it has helped.

PITT: Did factions develop on the advisory committee and on the board itself? For example, was there an east-west polarization when there came to be a vote?

CALLEIA: No. I think one thing that I admired about the Conservancy, and this applied to both the board and the advisory committee, was that we always acted in terms of what benefited the whole. To illustrate that, Circle X is in Ventura County and wasn't on the "must" list of the city of Los Angeles, but I felt that as a responsibility to the citizens of California, it ought to be saved. I have no doubt that there is a benefit to the citizens of Los Angeles and all the other cities in the metropolitan area because it's accessible to their citizens for recreation and camping and what have you. No, I think in that regard--I don't want to say that the Conservancy and the advisory committee were unique--but I am not aware of factions, parochial interests and that sort of thing.

PITT: That's very interesting. Eventually the board and the advisory committee began to meet jointly; perhaps you've already alluded to this. What brought this about? Was it a good arrangement in your opinion?

CALLEIA: Well, that happened during my chairmanship of the Conservancy and I think that was a result of the fact that the advisory committee felt that they were sort of, what's the term, spinning their wheels out there to the side somewhere and having no direct effect on the decisions of the Conservancy. Someone came up with the idea of our meeting together so that essentially we all hear the same thing and both bodies vote, and of course the vote of the advisory committee is advisory to the board of the Conservancy. That seemed to work very well. People felt that they were not out there doing their thing someplace--that they were, in fact, participating in decisions.

PITT: You mentioned the self-interest of some people. As you look back, were there any staunch enemies who just wanted the Conservancy and the NRA [National Recreation Area] to disappear into the ocean? Were there any villains in the piece that come to mind?

CALLEIA: No. I don't think there was anybody that I could recall that really wanted to destroy either the National Recreation Area or the Conservancy. And I think the reason for that was that from the beginning the Conservancy emphasized that we were willing to buy land from willing sellers, and to accept dedications as conditions of development. But even though we had the authority of eminent domain--which is to say, the power to condemn as a public agency--we never exercised it. So I think developers, although I think sometimes they may have seen us as a pain in the neck, I don't think they ever saw us as intractable enemies. I think that helped us a lot.

I thought, and still feel, that I don't think that public land should be preserved by exercising confiscatory zoning regulation. I think people are entitled to the value of their land and a fair return on their land. And the Conservancy also tried--and I can't give you off the top of my head specifics where this suggestion was actually used--but we did discuss and testify before the Legislature about the notion of having transferable development rights. And the idea was that if there was an area in the mountains or the coast that could not take heavy development, but there was another area that could take additional development beyond the existing zoning without drastic environmental degradation, then the people who were in the "restricted area" could sell those rights to the people in the less sensitive area. So everyone ends up being treated very fairly.

PITT: So that came to pass and there were some trades made.

CALLEIA: Yes. But it was a concept that at that time was fairly new, the idea of transferable development rights.

PITT: The executive director, Joseph [T.] Edmiston, has had a long-term commitment and exercised [strong] leadership decisions. What is your personal assessment of Joseph Edmiston and his role in the Conservancy?

CALLEIA: I think he is a great individual. I think his dedication to the Conservancy is unquestionable, at least to my mind. I think the Conservancy would have been much less effective without him.

PITT: Did your committee, the board, ever clash seriously with him?

CALLEIA: I don't know whether to characterize them as clashes, and whether those clashes were serious or not. Staff people come in two kinds. One kind, you have to be on their backs all the time to get any work out of them and you need to tell them exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. And the other kind are self-motivated, eager to go, energetic, self-starters. The latter kind you have to rein in from time to time. I think that's the kind of staff person Joe is. Having served in a staff capacity most of my adult life, I think the person who is a self-starter and has to be reined in from time to time is better than the one who waits to be told what to do.

PITT: So the mountains, the preservation of the mountains, is very much touched by his leadership, his vision?

CALLEIA: Oh, absolutely. And not only that. I think his work goes beyond the call of duty and he lives it 24 hours a day. He is very sharp. We would not have saved the site of the Renaissance Faire if it were not for the fact that he never gave up on it. And then we discovered that the original owner had gone into receivership and there was a note on the property and that's how we saved it.

PITT: Another dimension of this process of preservation and maintaining the long term goals of the Conservancy and the mountains was the grassroots efforts of many organizations, many people. What was your take on the involvement of grassroots organizations and grassroots people? I could mention a few. For example, the West Mulholland Homeowners, the Sierra Club, the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation. Give us your take on them.

CALLEIA: My take is that we wanted to build the broadest possible constituency, and everybody was welcome. The goal was to preserve what was really so beautiful in the mountains. That here practically in the middle of one of the largest cities in the world we had a touch of wilderness. If I'm not mistaken, it's one of the very few, if not the only, Mediterranean type ecology in the United States. And it was worth saving. And it was worth saving not only for us, but for the future. People say, "Why buy the land? What are you going to do with it?" I think saving it was a good enough reason for me, and let's decide later what needs to be done with it. Because I think keeping it an open space or keeping it as wildlife corridor is justification enough.

PITT: I've heard it said that in the early days of the National Recreation Area that most of the City Council of Los Angeles viewed the park in that area in a sort of casual manner. That it was the wealthy westsiders. That it was the pet of homeowners who were affluent, but that it was not of any great consequence to the city as a whole. Was this how they saw it? Was this characterization correct?

CALLEIA: Well, it's true as far as the generalization goes. Keep in mind that the environmentalist movement tended to be seen as an elitist movement. It was not unusual

for representatives of the urban core, so to speak, to see us as a bunch of dilettantes who liked to hug trees and smell flowers, whereas their constituents were constantly scratching for a living. I'm sympathetic to that view. But I think the Conservancy opened up the wilderness to children in the inner city, working with the city of Los Angeles, particularly, in the transportation department during our administration. We provided free transportation to the mountains, and gave inner city kids a chance to experience what wildlife can be like. And we cooperated with the YMCA and other agencies that had programs in the mountains, like the trail bikes and that sort of thing.

PITT Did you, as the appointed representative of the city, have to work with the [city] council and disabuse them of parochial views?

CALLEIA: No. I never felt that was necessary. I had been confirmed, I think unanimously, to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. I had, I think, if not an extensive record certainly a good record in civil rights. And I think my work for Tom Bradley gave me the kind of urban credentials that I think the council appreciated.

PITT: One hears a great deal about the lobbying of the developers in the council and in city hall. Did the developers try to lobby you personally, or was it others they were after to make their interests known?

CALLEIA: I'm trying to recall if there were any instances where I was personally lobbied. In a typical case what would happen is a developer would come in with a subdivision plan, and the Conservancy would comment on it, either under the EIR [Environmental Impact Report] process or as an interested public agency. That's how the position of the Conservancy was essentially expressed, through review of EIRs and tentative tracts and so on. And through this participation we often got land dedicated to the Conservancy. It was perfectly all right with the city. There was no contest, as far as that was concerned. During the Bradley administration, and I think it continues during the Riordan administration. I don't think there is any friction between the Conservancy and the city in terms of maximizing open space and recreation facilities.

PITT: So whatever lobbying did go on, went on at a different level. You alluded earlier to some mistakes that the Conservancy may have made. Could you be a little more specific about that?

CALLEIA: Well, I'd rather be general. I think there were instances where we felt we had to placate a segment of our constituency--where the conservationist or environmental values were really not as high as we would have liked them to be. One example is the second purchase in Fryman Canyon. This was a piece of land, if I'm not mistaken, about 64 acres, that was scheduled for subdivision, and if it had gone to subdivision the city and/or the Conservancy stood to get about 32 acres in dedication. Well, instead of doing that [City Councilman] Michael Woo, who was then running for mayor, decided he would talk to people in the area and get support for acquisition of the entire parcel. The owner was Sahadi and that is essentially what happened. To my mind, considering the state of the real-estate market at the time and the potential that we could have gotten half

the land for nothing, I felt that the city and the Conservancy together paid way too much. The Conservancy, in its allocation, never exceeded what the appraisal was, but the city I think possibly paid more.

PITT: William Fulton's recent book, *The Reluctant Metropolis*, is a book essentially about real-estate development in Southern California in the past 30 years or so.[3] He has a chapter on the Jordan Ranch controversy. At the risk of oversimplifying a detailed chapter based on a lot of interviews--it involves the ranch, it involves Joe Edmiston, [Ventura County] Supervisor Maria VanderKolk, Mary Weisbrock of Save Open Space [SOS], also Bob Hope and the Potomac Development, also the Ahmanson property, also the Malibu property. It's a very complex story. He writes about it as a chess game, and he takes that one instance of, I think, the late '80s into the early '90s as a paradigm for the development of the mountains generally. I hope I've characterized it correctly. Do you have any recollections of being involved in that whole thing and what is your memory of that controversy?

CALLEIA: Well, my memory is that there were these proposals for development. The Conservancy was impoverished and it was a question of what can we get with our leverage if not with our money? Now initially the people in SOS felt that we were playing the developers' game in making possible the development of Jordan and Ahmanson and the others. I do not think so. I feel it was a case of, you don't have the power to condemn and buy the land and development is going to be inevitable, because you cannot stop it. They have a right to develop it and there's much case law that says you cannot deny them the right to develop. So it was a question of trying to get the best you can for the public interest. I think that's what got SOS so unhappy. But I think it's a misrepresentation to think that the Conservancy, and in particular Joe Edmiston, was somehow in cahoots with the developers. I don't think it was ever so. I think it was a case of trying to make sure that what was dedicated to the public was decent, usable space, and not just precipitous goat country.

PITT: So you think the way it ended was satisfactory, all things considered? Or better than that?

CALLEIA: Well, you know, I don't want to make excuses. It's the art of the possible. You get what you can. I don't know whether it could have ended differently. And Ahmanson, I guess, is not quite finished. Some issues [are] still to be resolved with Ventura County, particularly, and the impact that the extension of the canyon there [will have]. But when you don't have money and you go for willing sellers and for dedications, how else do you go about it?

PITT: Do you, by the way, have any personal recollections of Supervisor VanderKolk?

CALLEIA: Yes. I remember Maria very well. I like Maria. She had no taste for politics once she got in.

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[3] *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles* (Point Arena, Calif.: Solano Press Books, 1997).

PITT: Do you have impressions of National Park Service superintendents and personnel regarding the mountains. Just to mention two of them--Superintendents [David] Gackenbach and Arthur Eck, the most recent one.

CALLEIA: Eck I don't know. Dave I knew, and got along well with. And [Daniel] Kuehn before him. And [Robert] Chandler before him. I think all of them were dedicated public servants. I think we and the Conservancy sometimes made them uneasy because we were so pushy.

PITT: You were more successful?

CALLEIA: It was not a question of being more successful. I think we had a constituency that we cultivated. We had our patron saint, Tony Beilenson in Washington. We were always using every leverage we could find to get the biggest possible appropriation for the mountains, which essentially, was and is the responsibility. But I don't think they were ever unhappy with what we did for them.

PITT: You mentioned Beilenson in a reverential mode.

CALLEIA: Yes.

PITT: Do you have any further things to say about Congressman Beilenson?

CALLEIA: You know, it made me so sad when Tony decided he was going to leave the Congress. I think he was such a good congressman. It's obviously an exaggeration to call him a saint. No one is a saint. But in terms of the creation of the park area, he has been very much the patron saint of the National Recreation Area in our mountains.

PITT: Let me mention a few more names of people who have been on the mountains, in the mountains, of the mountains, and see if you have impressions you'd like to share. You did mention that you worked with Marvin Braude. What has his contribution been? Again, I refer to that statement I made earlier: People have characterized, particularly in the early phase, that the efforts were denigrated as being those of strictly a very select, affluent crowd, and that he was their man. He was of them and by them. What is your impression?

CALLEIA: You know, when Marvin first ran for office in 1965, I think it was the first campaign for the City Council that had basically an environmentalist platform. I think that's where he created some resentments, essentially by claiming that he was the advocate of a park in the mountains when in fact there were other people who had worked with him, or with other groups, possibly as hard as he had. But for purposes of the campaign he had to project himself as the champion of the Santa Monica Mountains. And that, indeed, he was, once he was elected. I was his first deputy, and Marvin was talking about ecology before anyone knew what ecology meant. And conservation and environment.

His first battle in the City Council was essentially to keep the convention center out of Elysian Park, because when he was elected the [Samuel] Yorty [mayoral] administration had pretty much announced that they were willing to take 64 acres in the heart of Elysian Park and put a convention center there. And Marvin thought that was an outrage, and I felt it was an outrage, too, working for him. It was Marvin by essentially developing a proposal for a convention center downtown that eventually resulted in the development of the Convention Center at Pico-Figueroa.

PITT: He took some flak for, if I understand it correctly, his advocacy of the Mulholland Corridor. Can you recall that?

CALLEIA: I don't recall the specifics. But I know the development community as a whole did not like the idea of essentially codifying and enforcing scenic easements--establishing a 200-foot-wide corridor, keeping the development of the highway to two lanes instead of a four-lane highway, because obviously if Mulholland had been developed with four lanes there would have been much more development in the mountains, particularly to the west beyond San Vicente Peak. Marvin was for the Mulholland Corridor and I think his position was correct, and, of course, the Conservancy in its plans for the Santa Monica Mountains and the, what do you call it, the "Big Wild," I guess, the proposal [was to leave Mulholland unpaved all the way to Woodland Hills and to close it at Sunset to minimize problems]. He took some criticism and it took a long time to develop the Mulholland Plan. The reason I'm hesitating is because I'm trying to recall the timeline and the problems we ran into, but I think Marvin had the right position. And he stuck to it.

PITT: It's been said the city of L.A. was strong when lobbying for obtaining land acquisitions for the mountains and phasing out landfills and creating park plans to restrict overdevelopment, but that it was much weaker when it came to regulating and restricting development through the regulatory process. Is this a fair characterization? I suppose this would involve some response on your part about the planning.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: [Please pick up from where we were.]

CALLEIA: I think you were saying that the city of Los Angeles was not as effective in controlling development . . .

PITT: Right. As it was in obtaining land and in stopping landfills.

CALLEIA: And I think the reason for that is it took the initiative of the council person, whoever that was, to amend the various community plans. For instance, Marvin was the first one, I think, to bring in the Slope Density Ordinance. And the Slope Density Ordinance was instrumental, essentially, for reducing the density in the hills. Substantially. And in preventing the cut-and-fill terracing that had been going on. But as a generalization I can't pass judgment. I don't know.

PITT: Among the properties that the Conservancy acquired, you mentioned several. Certainly Temescal Canyon was one of the most important. Am I right about that?

CALLEIA: Yes.

PITT: Do you have any recollections about that that you would like to share with us?

CALLEIA: It seems that the desire to acquire Temescal goes as far back as anyone can remember. We had initially some conflict with the--that was a church-owned property--the Presbyterian conference grounds, was it? I think that has been ironed out. Temescal is a good gateway into the mountains. It was highly desirable for that reason and, of course, it's also one of the few canyons where you literally can walk from the beach into the mountains. So I think the Conservancy was right in pursuing that and putting that little park there at Sunset.

PITT: Now, were you a hiker and did you do a lot of personal exploring of the mountains when you had to make a decision?

CALLEIA: Yes. Not as much as I would have liked to because my job for Bradley kept me very busy, but I did go out and see proposed acquisitions and problems that the staff wanted to bring to our attention. And thank God for helicopters--I could see a lot.

PITT: Do you have any one particular recollection of something you learned from personal exploration or observation that sticks with you, either from a helicopter, or on foot, or by car?

CALLEIA: You mean where seeing it for myself changed my mind?

PITT: Yes.

CALLEIA: I can't off the top of my head recall an instance where it was a sort of awakening, if that's what you're looking for. I don't recall any such thing.

PITT: There were other people involved. We talked a little about Braude, about Beilenson. What about the supervisors, since the county was so crucial in the history of the mountains? The supervisors in the early years had a [more conservative] take on [preserving the mountains]. In other words, what were your impressions on the role of the county supervisors in the mountains?

CALLEIA: Well, the problem we had with the supervisors is I think they clung longer than the city to the notion that the Conservancy was an elitist kind of thing. Their concern stemmed from the unhappiness of the county sanitation districts in that we had blocked the development of landfills in Rustic and Sullivan and Mission canyons in the Santa Monica Mountains; and to put salt in their wounds, the Conservancy did that also in the Santa Clarita area where quite deliberately we bought some land to block access to certain canyons. Towsley was one of them and East Canyon, as well.

PITT: You didn't make any secret of what you were doing there?

CALLEIA: It was so obvious that you didn't have to explain it. So is it Fulton who said it was a chess game? In that regard, it was indeed a chess game. It was deadly serious.

PITT: Any impressions of the Coastal Commission? Did it fulfill its responsibilities to the mountains, or not?

CALLEIA: Well, their approach was different. They were very unhappy with us because to acquire Circle X we went to the Legislature and essentially borrowed funds that belonged to the Coastal Conservancy. The modus operandi, in our case, was to acquire as much land as we possibly could--that, money in the bank, we felt was no good at all. We [needed] to buy this land before prices went out of reach. You maximize your purchases by not letting inflation eat away the value of your money. And that's the way the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy operated. We were always spending money and always out hustling to get more. The Coastal Conservancy had money put aside, and they were not acquiring land the way we were. And when we went to the Legislature and essentially took some of their money to acquire Circle X, I think there was some resentment, but I think the resentment was on the bureaucratic level.

PITT: It's been said that the supervisors were the most susceptible to the pressures of the developers. Was that your take also on this story?

CALLEIA: Well, let me put it this way. The most worrisome thing in the mountains, particularly beyond the boundaries of the city of Los Angeles, was the fact that hills were being bulldozed down, and gullies filled, and obscenely huge villas were being built in the hills beyond Agoura and Calabasas, and that sort of thing, which were interrupting and destroying natural water courses, destroying vegetation, wildlife habitat, and what

have you. [It involved] the control of subdivisions, or, actually more of individual developments than subdivisions planned at the time. One could say they [the county] didn't care, but they certainly were not exercising any control. I mentioned the site of the Renaissance Faire. I don't recall what the permissible number of houses the county would have allowed, but from my point of view it was obscene. So it was easier to develop in the county than in the city.

PITT: Part of the business of oral history is to recognize the work of people who might otherwise not be remembered at all. Are there some people, staff people for example, that you think deserve some special mention who did things quietly behind the scenes and deserve to have recognition?

CALLEIA: Well, some of them are still there. And I think Joe Edmiston is number one. But there is Rorie Skei and we had another person who has since moved away who was most devoted--I'm trying to remember her name.

PITT: We can come back to that.

CALLEIA: Her name is remembered in Towsley Canyon Park. I think the wildlife exhibit at Towsley is named after her. But she worked very hard. And, of course, probably the most unsung is Ruth Kilday. Ruth is the [Mountains Conservancy] Foundation, and she has a feel for these mountains. I don't know whether this is myth or not, but somebody told me that she has some Chumash blood in her, too, but I think she has worked harder than anybody.

PITT: Can you briefly describe the role of the Foundation, and how it differs from the Conservancy itself, or the advisory committee.

CALLEIA: Well, the Foundation is entirely private, and it tries to raise money and it's always looking to raise money, and for that reason its activities cannot be mixed with functions that are paid for by the taxpayers. At the same time, the money they raise goes to public causes where the Conservancy has no public funds. I think the Foundation is very useful.

PITT: As I understand it, its life may be coming to an end now.

CALLEIA: Is that right? Why is that?

PITT: I'm not certain what the motivation is, but I believe that to be the case. Well, we'll see if I'm right about that. I'll let you know.

Did the Conservancy and Edmiston overstep legal limits by buying land outside the Santa Monicas? Were you part of the discussions when they had to take some heat about that?

CALLEIA: The heat was not because Joe was suggesting anything that was extra-legal. I think the heat came from people who felt that we were going beyond what our original

purpose was. I assume that you are alluding to the property out by Palmdale and also the area in Whittier--one of the canyons in Whittier.

PITT: Right.

CALLEIA: Well, what became obvious to us is that once we were established, communities were coming to the Conservancy wanting to link up with us and use the instrumentality of the Conservancy to preserve what they thought was [valuable]. Simi and Moorpark, and all these places, came to us, they came to the Conservancy. Needless to say they were welcome. I think these communities saw an opportunity to provide open space and recreation and environmental values for their citizens. One of the most successful joint powers agencies is the Mountain Recreation Conservation Authority which was sired essentially by the Conservancy and the Conejo and Simi Valley recreation districts.

PITT: Were the Ventura [County] Board of Supervisors part of that?

CALLEIA: I can't remember. No. I think only the local districts.

PITT: What other local districts and incorporated cities deserve mention either for good works or being obstreperous.

CALLEIA: I serve as the appointee of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy on the Joint Powers Agency in the Santa Clarita and Santa Clara river valley, and that's a Joint Powers Agency between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the city of Santa Clarita. Now there is a proposal to expand that joint powers entity to include the county of Los Angeles, as well, and that joint powers agency is known as the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority. It takes in the Santa Clarita Woodlands area and the land that's going to be dedicated by the Newhall Ranch development. We work very well with the city of Santa Clarita. They have two representatives and the Conservancy has two representatives. The other representative from the Conservancy is Jerry Daniel (and I am the other appointee).

PITT: You still serve in that capacity?

CALLEIA: Yes. On the board.

PITT: It's been said that Thousand Oaks had a very good record relative to preservation of the environment.

CALLEIA: Yes.

PITT: I looked at the archives of the Conservancy and found a volume named "Closed Session Minutes." I found another one, "Confidential Book 1993-97." As a matter of curiosity, can you enlighten me as to what I might find in there if I were permitted to see

them? And also, I might ask this question simultaneously: Were there closed sessions of the Conservancy and what sort of things were raised there?

CALLEIA: Well, the only thing that could be raised, and the only legal justification for holding a closed session is pending litigation. And I think without exception that's what all those sessions were about. I think there's another exception in the open meeting law for personnel matters, but I don't recall a single session that I participated in, that had to do with personnel. Most of them had to do with law suits, either someone suing the Conservancy or the Conservancy counter suing, or that sort of thing. I think that's what those minutes are.

PITT: I don't recall anybody ever accusing the Conservancy of behaving in a secret or conspiratorial manner, so I didn't think there's a big story there.

CALLEIA: No.

PITT: It's been said that the biggest debacle was the Soka issue, the refusal, or the inability of the National Park Service, or Tony Beilenson, or the Conservancy to acquire that property for the National Recreation Area. What's your recollection of that?

CALLEIA: I was a strong advocate of acquiring the Soka property and the King Gillette House, too. And it's really probably the most important crossroads in the Santa Monica Mountains and it's also cheek-by-jowl next to the [Diamond X] National Park Service property. I would have preferred to have all that land--all the way to Las Virgenes Road--in public domain, especially when you consider that on the other side is the Malibu Creek State Park. But it was not to be because without the money you cannot do it. Looking back, we risked a great deal by taking on Soka. Again, it's a case of you hope for the best, expect the worst and accept what comes along.

PITT: What was the big risk?

CALLEIA: Well, the risk was that if we went to condemnation and couldn't come up with the money. That's a great risk.

PITT: This was one of the rare cases where condemnation proceedings was contemplated.

CALLEIA: I think this was the first and only time that condemnation proceedings were seriously considered. And again, in terms of constituencies, the city of Calabasas clearly wanted the Soka property acquired by the Conservancy or the National Park Service. But I think the reason the Conservancy tried to get it was in terms of the mountain parks and the values embodied in the property.

PITT: So as far as your concerned, no recriminations toward the people who tried to obtain it? There were recriminations at the time that it wasn't a vigorous enough effort, or it was a sellout, or what have you.

CALLEIA: No. I think it was as vigorous as was possible at the time. And I think if it was Joe that led the effort, which I think he did, I think it was a valiant effort.

PITT: Early on you mentioned some things you were very proud of, the Boy Scout Circle X, for example. Are there some other things? In fact, what was your proudest achievement in your 14-year association with the Conservancy?

CALLEIA: I think it was a continuing feeling of pride that the members of the Conservancy resisted temptations to be parochial and to cater to parochial constituencies. I think for that reason the entire region benefited and I think the people of California benefited as a result of that. I think it's difficult to find another public agency that has representatives from different organizations where the representatives don't try all the time to represent the interests of their appointees. I can truthfully tell you that in my, I guess, 11 years on the board of the Conservancy, I always had the feeling that everybody on that board was looking at the greater public interest. Regardless of politics, by the way, because, you know, one of the guys I admired and really loved is Roger Gertmanian, an appointee of Deukmejian.

PITT: A member of the board?

CALLEIA: Yes. A member of the board. Politically a very conservative Republican. But I never doubted that Roger was dedicated to preserving the beauty and natural resources of the mountains, and he was instrumental in really saving Devil's Gate just below JPL [Jet Propulsion Laboratory] in the mountains there, and in acquiring some additional land adjacent to--I think it's called Cherry Canyon--adjacent to Descanso Gardens. So I think it wasn't a question of whether you were a Republican or a Democrat.

PITT: Are there other board members whom you'd like to remember as having exceptional qualities? Contributions?

CALLEIA: I hate to do so for fear of overlooking somebody who might be more deserving, because I really got along with all of them. I thought all of them made an honest effort, a sincere effort, and I think that's what I expect.

PITT: That's a fair answer. Now you served, as you say, until February '94 and you would have liked to stay on.

CALLEIA: Yes.

PITT: You would have liked to have been reappointed. Any thoughts about why you didn't get reappointed?

CALLEIA: No. I don't think it was necessarily specific displeasure about my performance. I think the new mayor [Riordan] felt this was a new administration and he

wanted his appointee there. I respect Ed Begley. He has good environmental credentials. I don't know whether he has as much taste for a political fight as I do, but Ed is a good guy.

PITT: And he of course is the current mayor's appointee.

CALLEIA: Mayor's appointee. Right.

PITT: Well, do you have something you want to add? Something I didn't ask you to make this story complete?

CALLEIA: No. My feeling is, and this sounds terribly self-serving, but I think this region of the state would be much poorer except for the work of the Conservancy. I think the Conservancy, you know, we tease Joe because we say any moment he's going to come in with a proposal to extend our boundaries to include Mount Shasta. [laughter] But maybe there ought to be a mountains conservancy that's broader. And yet if it gets too big, it would not be able to do many of the things we were able to do. I think our ability to respond quickly to opportunities, our agility, if you will, was a result largely of our size and our lack of bureaucratic entanglements. You know, it was Joe and literally a handful of staff, and I think that makes for a mean and lean kind of organization.

PITT: Some people look at the map today, review the 20 years or so of history and they see a patch quilt of land--now it's in and now it's out of a park--or it's missing from the puzzle. They see the developments that have come along, these villas and mansions and roads and so on. And they say, "Well, not so terrific, not so good. Could have been a lot better." You look at it today and you say what? Your overview.

CALLEIA: My overview is that if you need to compare the map as it was in 1980 and compare it with the way it is, admittedly there are pieces of land that seem to be disconnected. But they're all within the boundaries of this big puzzle we're trying to put together. And when you consider that because of financial restraints the Conservancy has been limited to dedications, donations and willing sellers, then I think it's remarkable that we've been able to acquire as much as we have. We've never had the luxury of drawing a line on the map and saying, "This is going to be the backbone trail, and that every property that's in it, we will acquire." Because we haven't had the money. You know, like the Capra property that came on the market recently. It's a key section of the Backbone Trail.

I don't know how to respond to people who say we could have done much better. Because the reality is I wish I had done much better. And I think it remains for history to determine whether we did the best with what we had or whether we were lazy or somehow delinquent in some way. I have tremendous respect for Joe Edmiston. In my family he's known as Sly Fox because when there's a piece of land that he feels belongs in this park he leaves no stone unturned trying to figure out a way to get it. Such dedication I think is admirable, really admirable. I think he comes as close to being the indispensable person as anybody I know in any organization. I think he's done a lot of good. Mistakes? Sure. Yes.

PITT: Well, that's a good note on which to conclude. I personally, would congratulate you on your years of service in the cause of the mountains and I thank you sincerely for the interview, as well.

CALLEIA: Thank you, Leonard.

[The recorder is shut off briefly]

PITT: A small addendum. I recall a question that I would have liked to ask. Anton, I know that you gave testimony in the Legislature several times. Can you tell us what you were sent there to achieve, and what committees you appeared before, and what you may have accomplished?

CALLEIA: Yes. These were committees of the Legislature and usually we went up there when there was a bill that affected the Conservancy or when we had asked for specific legislation and funding to acquire a piece of land. Largely because of Joe's efforts, I think we had good, strong bi-partisan support, so it really didn't matter if it was [Governor George] Deukmejian or [Pete] Wilson or whoever was up there. We usually got good support. And as you know the funding for the Conservancy came out of Budget, and the revenue specifically came from, I think it's called the Conservation Fund. I could be wrong. But anyway, its money derived from royalties paid to state from state exploration. Oil extraction and so on. So we went before committees of the Legislature in support of our own budget, and sometimes in support of legislation to support legislation to provide funding for specific acquisitions. Senator Ed Davis, for instance, brought a bill through to acquire the Santa Clarita Woodlands, and there were other examples which now escape me where the Legislature specifically gave us money to acquire a piece of land.

PITT: Thank you.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— IV —

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

An Interview with Robert Chandler

Robert Chandler, the first superintendent of the recreation area, was interviewed on July 12, 1999, at the National Park Service headquarters in Thousand Oaks, California. Following his retirement from NPS in 1996 he remained active with the National Park Foundation.

Interviewee: Robert Chandler
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape 1, Side A

PITT: It is July 12, 1999. I am Leonard Pitt and I am interviewing Mr. Robert Chandler, who was the first superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. We are in the Anthony Beilenson Visitor Center in Thousand Oaks. We've agreed that I will call you Bob and you'll call me Leonard.

CHANDLER: Okay. Or Bob.

PITT: Len is going to work also.

CHANDLER: "Bob" works best for me.

PITT: Bob, could you please tell us briefly about your personal background--where you were born and raised, where you were educated, [your] professional experience, and how you entered the National Park Service.

CHANDLER: I was born in Washington, D.C. in 1936, went to the University of Maryland, I got a degree in agriculture from the University of Maryland in 1958, went to about a year of grad school but left grad school and went to work for the National Park Service in Washington D.C., in National Capitol Parks--which is the organization that manages the parts in the D.C. area--as a horticulturist. From there I moved to West Virginia and opened one of the first Job Corps conservation centers in the country, a 200-man center. From there I moved west to Mt. Rainier as assistant superintendent, and then on to Chicago to open a field office, and from there to St. Louis, St. Louis to Santa Monica Mountains, north to Olympic, and then to Everglades and Grand Canyon and the Presidio. So I completed 38 years with the Park Service in December of '96. In the time since, I've been working with the National Park Foundation. Would you like me to reflect on how I got to the Santa Monica Mountains?

PITT: Yes, please.

CHANDLER: When I was in St. Louis the director of the National Park Service, who was Bill [William] Whalen at the time, came to St. Louis. It was early September of '78, and [he] asked me to come to the Santa Monica Mountains to start this new recreation area. He felt that I had the background and the experience and was the right person to do that. The legislation, of course, hadn't passed at that time, but he was certain that it was going to pass based on his tracking and close relationship with Phil [Rep. Phillip] Burton. He was sure that it was going to pass and flattered me by coming to St. Louis to say, "You're the person this organization [needs] to go out to California and do this." Of course, I wasn't sure, but I said, "Yes I'd like to first go out and take a look at the place." So later in September I actually flew out to L.A. and met a planner from San Francisco. His name was Nick Weeks, and we drove all over the mountains, just looked at everything, all the roads, and spent a long, long day looking at the place. I was immediately captivated by the potential here, the amount of open space that still remained in this hugely congested area, and the number of people that the National Recreation Area could serve. The proximity of the oceans and the mountains--all of the ingredients were here to do something really spectacular.

So, I went back to St. Louis very enthused about what this could be but also somewhat unnerved by the scale of what was being proposed here, and the huge task of figuring out how to put it together, because clearly no one had a formula. There was no prescription about how to do this. As soon as the legislation passed, I gave Bill Whalen the word that I was willing to come and do this. I actually flew back out here right after I had accepted the job. I think it was in December, and we had a meeting with Mayor [Tom] Bradley in his office and we met with the L.A. City Council, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, [and] provided a briefing and introduced me and talked about the future and the excitement of putting this together for the L.A. region**.** And then on New Year's Day--January 1st--I actually left St. Louis and headed West with my oldest son.

It's amazing how quickly it moved. It's unusual in the Park Service for a law to pass authorizing an area, and [for] the superintendent to be named and [be] on board so quickly. I think that was some good foresight by the director at the time--to recognize that he had to get this thing moving quickly. I got here and stayed in an apartment in Santa Monica for a month and then moved to an apartment in Reseda.

The first office was actually in the Federal Building in downtown L.A. The National Park Service had an information office there and they had a back storeroom, and that was the first office for about four months before we moved out to Woodland Hills. I walked in and there was absolutely nothing. I had a telephone and a desk, and it was like this table and it was piled high with yellow phone slips of all the people who wanted to get in touch with me. I had never been so popular in my life. Everybody wanted my ear to share their opinion about what this place should be or what it shouldn't be, or what to watch out for. I spent a lot of time listening. It's really important that I did that as much as I did. You just see as many people and listen to as many people and try to sort out the points of view, the ideas, the concerns people had about this, and [I] was lobbied heavily on all kinds of things.

The first effort, of course, was to put together a staff, develop the infrastructure: everything from buying furniture, to getting telephone systems hooked up, getting the people on board who could hire the personnel, getting a land acquisition person here who

could put together a land acquisition office. Building the infrastructure was very much part of what I did early on.

Moving out to Woodland Hills was a good thing, because commuting from L.A. to Reseda I discovered was not something I wanted to do [laughing] for my tenure in L.A. But it was a good experience for getting a sense of the L.A. traffic and how people live and work here, and recognizing that's part of the culture of this region. It's the automobile and how wed people are to it.

PITT: And crossing back and forth over the mountains every day.

CHANDLER: One of the most striking experiences I had [was] when I found this apartment up on Reseda Blvd. as a place to hang out for a while until we figured how and where we were going to live. I drove to the south end of Reseda Blvd., and there was a fire road. And I remember walking up that fire road and all the sounds from the San Fernando Valley--the ambient noise--was just so much there. And the further I walked up into the chaparral, it was just like someone turned down the volume of this background noise, and I started to hear birds and it got quiet and it was so close and yet in less than a mile suddenly it was a completely different environment. You could look back and see the city with all of its density and say, "Wow! This is good stuff." It was a great experience. It was one of those kind of early and indelible moments that reinforced the importance of what we're trying to do here.

And then the whole issue of how to proceed to deal with putting together the park. We had the legislation. I often describe that I had the bill in my hip pocket and the director essentially said, Go out and figure out how to do it. Because there wasn't any direction from Washington that this is the way it had to be done, [and] from San Francisco, the Regional Office wasn't saying, well, here's the thing you have to do first. It was, you go figure it out--which on one hand was really great, because it gave me a lot of freedom to kind of use whatever instincts I had to sort out the process and the priorities.

Clearly we had to work with the three major jurisdictions. It was important as we began the process of how this was going to develop as a national recreation area to keep in mind that we couldn't work with just one jurisdiction, but had to make sure we were paying attention to the three major jurisdictions--the city of Los Angeles, county of Los Angeles, and Ventura County. Certainly many other jurisdictions—California State Parks, the [California] Coastal Commission, [Los Angeles] County Parks [and Recreation]--a tremendous number of players involved.

PITT: The state.

CHANDLER: The state. No small player, the state. [laughter] And getting to work with the State Parks and developing a relationship early with the State Parks director in Sacramento, who was Russ Cahill at the time. But also working with the district manager who oversaw the four state parks in the Santa Monica Mountains and developing an early relationship with them, so that we were seen as an organization that was bringing some value. There is always a concern that when the feds come in and the state has an existing presence that the motive is somehow to take over the state. And very early we laid to rest

[the fear] that our objective was not to take over the state parks but rather to figure out how we could work collaboratively to do the best for the overall resource of the Santa Monica Mountains. That took a little time, because certainly at the local level, I think, there was some suspicion that our real motive was to turn this into a big federal enclave and somehow the state would be a secondary player.

One of the early things we had to do with the legislation was to figure out where the exact boundaries were going to be. The map that was considered the legislative map was one that had been generated by the Friends of Santa Monica Mountains. I think they used a very wide felt tip pen in putting together that boundary. So there were a lot of questions, particularly around the periphery of the National Recreation Area, in exactly what was in and what was out. We spent a lot of time early on walking the boundary, making decisions, getting it more defined.

An interesting example is that the little leg that went into Santa Monica was so wide that it included City Hall in Santa Monica and much of downtown Santa Monica. So as soon as I was on board, the [Santa Monica] City Council summoned me down to talk to them because the last thing they wanted was to be included in this federal national recreation area. It was a good meeting. I explained these were preliminary boundaries and it was not the intent to include City Hall [laughter] in the national recreation area. But rather we wanted to have the state owned coastal beaches included. And so that didn't amount to anything, and when we did the final boundaries it was clear that that concern was taken care of.

But as we went around the edge there were a lot of concerns. A lot of people wanted to include Griffith Park. That was a big issue. The city was pretty adamant that they did not want it included, felt that that was the central park for Los Angeles and that it should be the city's thing and not somehow overshadowed by a federal recreation area. So, while all of these trips and meetings and looking at boundary issues [were] under way, of course, a lot of people were approaching me with their ideas of what should be added, or what should be deleted, so there was a tremendous amount of discussion and lobbying and debate about all of those things.

We had the environmental community on one side and [they] saw this as a great opportunity to get as much as they could. The Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains, the Sierra Club, were very active. The three women that I worked with that were sort of the core of the environmental activism, Margot [Feuer] and Jill Swift of the Sierra Club, and Sue Nelson, Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains, were three women who were always just right there. And they were very supportive. Clearly they had been actively working on this for some time. They were kind of drivers on the environmental side. But there were a lot of developers that were very nervous about how this was going to proceed. Many of them had already had plans approved by whatever jurisdiction, County Planning, or whatever, and they were really concerned about the feds coming in and scooping up land. We were fortunate in the early years. We received some appropriation so there was actually some money there to begin land acquisitions. It helped create the sense that this was not just a park on paper, but that there was actually money to buy parkland. We also at the time had condemnation authority. The intent was not to use it, but the fact that it was there gave us some leverage in working with the landowners of some of the critical parcels. Is this [narrative] okay?

PITT: This is wonderful.

CHANDLER: Can I just ramble on? It's kind of like free association.

PITT: No, this is fine. A broad general overview and it's very fascinating. You've already told me some things I did not know. I will let you go [on] and afterward I'll ask you some questions.

CHANDLER: Okay. Well, one of the things that was happening about this time was that the whole Sagebrush Rebellion began to grow. I mean there was very strong anti-government sentiment in the West, and even though that was not necessarily reflected in urban centers like L.A., I think that a lot of the people who lived and owned land in the Santa Monica Mountains, identified with the Sagebrush Rebellion principle and idea and were very supportive of anti-government sentiment, particularly [of] big government buying more land. So, I got to know who was out here, both from the standpoint of the developers but also [from] a lot of individuals who had purchased land to live in the wilderness, and develop their own little piece of property. They were listening very strongly to what was coming out of places like Wyoming and Montana and Idaho, and were buying in. They were hearing people like Chuck Cushman. In fact, Chuck Cushman came out a few times to kind of stir up and build support to resist this idea of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

The other thing that was happening that reinforced that was that it occurred at about the time that the oil embargo, and gasoline prices went through the ceiling and rationing occurred and there were long gasoline lines. And somehow that was all attributed to federal mismanagement, so there was a lot of anger. One of the things that I had to deal with was that a lot of the citizens were just angry at what they were dealing with, from getting gasoline to the concern about federal takeover, and the federal government buying more land and locking it up, that sort of thing. So that was part of the dynamic we were dealing with at the time.

Real early in the process I recall an interesting anecdote [about] Phil Burton, who was very powerful in Congress at the time and was very proud of the Omnibus Bill that he got through in '78, which included the Santa Monica Mountains. I went to two meetings with him, situations where he would just sit back in the chair and tell the story of how he got this done, with a great deal of pride and flair. It was marvelous. And at one of these meetings--they were all Park Service people at this meeting-- and it had been a few months that I had been on board. I had read through the legislation trying to sort out some of the pieces, and I remember pulling a few of the passages of the legislation out and asking him, "What was your intent, what is the meaning of this particular section?" And he would kind of stare at me and say, "Well, just do what's right." And I did that twice, and I made the mistake of asking it a third time, just trying to probe a little bit to find out what I could find out from this great congressman and the chairman of the subcommittee who was the architect of this great piece of legislation. The last time he looked at me and said, "Young man, do what you can get away with." [laughter] I took that as a great lesson.

PITT: Right!

CHANDLER: So, the fact that we had had some land acquisition appropriation early on enabled us to put together a land acquisition staff. The Park Service gave us local land acquisition authority, which was great, which means, again, we had a fair amount of autonomy in making decisions about which parcels to buy and where to focus our initial land acquisition efforts. Part of the strategy--once we had defined the boundary, so we knew what was in the overall boundary--was to take a look at what made the best sense to focus on as part of our priority.

How did we want to grow this National Recreation Area from a land base standpoint? It was obvious that we could never buy all the land within the 150,000 acres--[that is,] all the private land. Of course, much of it was public land. We then began to look at how to start the process of identifying those areas where we should use fee acquisition. [At the same time we developed categories of land protection where less-than-fee acquisition would be used, or where a cooperative planning arrangement would work.] [This] was part of sorting through the range of possibilities, on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Does this fit? Is this going to be a hole in a donut? Do we really need to look at acquiring this, or can we use an easement here? It took a tremendous amount of time and a lot of field work. I spent a huge amount of time the first couple of years just out in the field--weekends, evenings, just driving the fire roads and walking to get a sense for what was there. So that was an important thing.

PITT: I'm just going to interrupt you just one second and see if the machine is working as well as it should be.

[The machine is turned off for a few moments of testing]

PITT: Please [continue].

CHANDLER: Okay. We also early on recognized that these large blocks of State Parks land in many ways formed the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains in terms of the natural systems that they included. They were not overly developed. There had been an attempt to develop, in a very active way, Point Mugu State Park. That had been beaten down by the environmental community, so what we had was Topanga, Leo Carrillo, Malibu Creek, and Mugu State Park. They were big blocks of pretty much undisturbed land. So the idea of finding ways to link these so we could make a whole, both in terms of wildlife corridors, but also trail opportunities, and kind of tying them together so that the National Recreation Area, which was composed of a lot of jurisdictions would be a whole. We began to look at where the opportunities were to do that. We also wanted to make sure we had some action, early on, in all the jurisdictions, so we looked for early opportunities to tie things together.

The other thing that we had in mind was that the idea of this as a National Recreation Area was sold to Congress largely on the fact that there was a need in this kind of dense urban center for recreation. A lot of the recreation wasn't occurring in the State Parks. They didn't have the money. They were State Parks in name, but in some areas you couldn't even get in to them. There were no trails. So we felt some obligation to identify some pieces of land that had been developed that could provide opportunities

for more active recreational use. So part of the trade-off is that we'd want to go out and use the first money to buy some of the more remote mountain properties [where] you could get more acreage for less money. Or do we want to look at some of the properties that were closer in, that were adjacent to urban areas, or to the State Parks that would provide active recreation opportunity? We decided that we should really do both. We pursued opportunity purchases that would enable us to build on the areas identified as important for fee ownership. At the same time, we ought to fairly aggressively look at how to acquire some of these areas near the urban areas and adjacent to state parks that could be developed for more active recreation. Examples are Paramount Ranch, Rancho Sierra Vista and Franklin Canyon. That led to the early acquisition of Rancho Sierra Vista, where the Warmington Development Company had the plans all drawn for a major subdivision just growing out from Newbury Park, south of Potrero Road, right next to Point Mugu State Park, so we identified that one early on as one [where] we wanted to draw the line at Potrero Road. Everything south should be parkland. [referring to the wall map] Right there at Newbury Park. I remember going to a meeting with the Warmington Development Company. Young Warmington [was] at the end of this table that was probably as long as this building and surrounded by lawyers. [laughter] There were a lot of subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle attempt[s] to just get you to back off, and [it was] "Don't consider this"--"We're too far along"--"We're not interested"--"Leave us alone." What I learned very quickly is that's not the way you work it. We had to be consistent in our resolve to do this. It involves a lot of meetings, and sooner or later they would come around in many cases, and be willing to sell.

Again, I think the specter of having condemnation authority was there, and we would always say in meetings that it's not our intention to use condemnation, but at the same time acknowledging that the federal government has condemnation authority. It's hard to know how much weight that carried: whether the economics of selling in one chunk, at whatever the market value was, was more enticing, or whether there was any real concern about condemnation. I think clearly some of the property owners were concerned about that, and of course Chuck Cushman and Concerned Citizens for Public Property Rights, or whatever [the name was], were ringing that [bell] loud and clear. There were articles in the newspaper, and people were making a lot of noise about condemnation, but it was not our intent to come and just say, We want this, and condemn it.

About the same time we started working on the Warmington Tract, the Paramount Ranch opportunity came along. Again, the developer there was really anxious to develop that [property]. We had many, many meetings. Developers would frequently go to find a friendly member of Congress to intervene, or go to the county supervisors. They would work whatever political angle they could to, in many cases to get us to back off, and try to make a case that they were far enough along that the park doesn't need this. In most cases we had pretty good support--certainly from Tony Beilenson. Barry Goldwater Jr. was a little less certain in terms of how he would come down on some of those kinds of things. But we were able to eventually get the Paramount Ranch piece, the piece across the street--the Rogers Tract came on the market very early. So we were able to get everything right at that intersection on the north side, which I thought was a really important purchase, because it was an area that had been heavily used and was pretty well

impacted, but also provided great access off of [Highway] 101 for some uses north of Malibu Creek State Park.

The area that was further east that we really wanted to do more with--the Claretville property--which was then acquired by the Church Universal and Triumphant--was always identified in the early planning as the logical place for sort of the nucleus and the park headquarters. It had great existing facilities for education programs and all kinds of things. Right after I got here it was pretty clear that they were also concerned and willing to dig in their heels and weren't about to offer up anything for us. In fact, one of the early leaflets that they sent out to their membership had some description of me as this new evil . . .

PITT: Really!

CHANDLER: . . . coming into the Santa Monica Mountains, and encouraging their people to pray that [they can] get rid of this new evil that was coming to challenge their deep religious beliefs. I went a couple of times and met with their business manager, Ed Francis, who later married the religious leader Elizabeth Clair Prophet. I guess he's still actually running the organization outside of Yellowstone now. But we had some very direct discussions about what we would like to see and what we would like to have, but it was pretty clear that we weren't going to condemn a church. He knew that--that there was really no way to get that [property] unless there was some agreement by them to sell or unless they decided to develop [the property] in ways that would generate enough public pressure [so] that the government might be willing to step in, based on broad public interest to do something. That was always an interesting one to wrestle with, because we never knew how long that outfit was going to stay there, whether they would move on as they do frequently, and there would be some other opportunity. I guess Soka University is in there now.

PITT: Yes.

CHANDLER: That's a story in itself, that piece of property and how it's evolved. At about the same time we were looking at doing something in the city [of Los Angeles], the Franklin Canyon ranch came on the market. We went down and looked at that. We thought that while it's not in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains, to be able to do something in the city--and just looking at that photo [pointing to aerial photo mounted on the wall] that it's a little green blur just west of Griffith Park. The idea of preserving that valley and providing some education programs there was very appealing. At the time we first visited there it was actually a cattle ranch. They had longhorn cattle up there in Beverly Hills.

PITT: I'll just interject. We happen to be looking at a wall photograph which shows some of the boundaries and the urban buildup.

CHANDLER: Yes, it's very helpful to be staring at that as I am talking because it helps to think about those places and what went on. Essentially that was it. As I look at what has been purchased to date, most of the properties that are now the centers for activity

were actually purchased during the first two-and-a-half years, I would say, of land acquisition. So it was great that we had the initial appropriations to do that and begin to get some toehold and start the process of making the [Santa Monica Mountains] National Recreation Area a reality. The unfortunate thing is that we really had no construction funds to develop recreation facilities--Congress was pretty clear--they were not giving any development money to construct anything. Little by little we had to use existing facilities and take some operating money to do some things at Paramount Ranch to provide for some more public use there. There just wasn't money to follow up quickly, once a purchase occurred, to go and develop it in a way that might have been helpful, other than some simple things like some trails, and graded parking areas, and that sort of thing.

The largest purchase during my time here was the Cheeseboro Canyon piece, north of Highway 101, and that was an interesting one, too, because we developed a relationship with the Trust for Public Lands who wanted to come in and assist in this process. They really had some very good land acquisition people that knew tax laws and could talk to property owners about the benefits of a bargain sale to them. So we worked out an arrangement with them, and agreed that we would buy Cheeseboro Canyon from them once they consummated the deal. And that went forward. There was at the time some disagreement in the environmental community that somehow we were leaving the main core of the Santa Monica Mountains and going further north and beginning to expand up into the Santa Susana Hills, and that sort of thing. [They were] questioning the wisdom of that. Do we really have to do that when we really have so much need in the Malibu area? But we felt it was really important, the idea to provide a link to the north to the open space that's still up there in the China Flat area. The area there seemed to be something that made a lot of sense to us, both as a recreation access area, but also a wildlife corridor, because there's not much of a corridor any place else as you come out of the San Fernando Valley and head for Thousand Oaks. So it seemed like a really good purchase.

The one related to that, that we really hoped that we could acquire, was the large piece of property that was immediately south of 101 as you start down Malibu Canyon Road.

PITT: Is that the one near Conejo Peak?

CHANDLER: No. If you come up Malibu Canyon Road and up Las Virgenes just before you get to Highway 101 there was a big flat area on the left that was completely undeveloped at the time, except for a couple of things right at the intersection there. It would have been an ideal open space connection between Malibu Creek State Park all the way up the 101, and then the Cheeseboro/ Palo Comado piece north of there. [It] would have provided a great major entrance corridor into the center of the recreation area. It was, in fact, for sale, but the value was about $14 million at the time and we just didn't have the money. Without getting the Claretville property, that would have been a good piece to get as sort of the core for setting up the park visitor center, the main entrance into the central part of the Santa Monica Mountains.

A lot of the first few years focused on land acquisition and how to approach it and what to acquire. We had lots of meetings in all of the jurisdictions and they were always

very hot meetings because of the time and what was going on. There were always property owners there raising their voices and shouting in very animated ways [about] why we should just go away and leave them alone. And developers and attorneys, and their reps, always there to make the case. So we had to just wade through that and work through it bit by bit.

We were also building support at the same time. We were talking with property owners, home owners associations, and trying to communicate the value there would be to preserve open space in these places--that [it] really enhances their quality of life. So, on the one hand, we were pretty much in a defensive posture [due to] the people that were resisting the federal government coming in and acquiring land, and on the other hand we were trying to build support from the larger community. The further you got away from the core of the Santa Monicas, the easier it was to build support for what we were doing here. A kind of inverse relationship there.

And then we started the planning process to put together the General Management Plan. We'd already made some of the decisions about where some of the key activity sites would be, with the establishment of the Advisory Commission--getting it actually set up and operating. We then started the process of planning. It was a huge, huge plan. We were fortunate in [that] I was able to convince Bill Whalen to let John Reynolds come as the head of planning, to put together the resource management and planning effort. (He is now the regional director here in San Francisco.) That was a real plus. I remember we convened a bunch of planners here. We had a mini-charette for a couple of days, talking about where we need to go and how we need to develop a plan. They came back at the end of this time and made the presentation to me with all of their ideas, and said what we really need to do is bring in a chief planner to assemble the team and put this thing together, and do it on site, not have a team come in from someplace else to do it, but actually have your own team. I said, "That's great. I agree with you totally. Which one of you is going to stay and do that?" And everybody ran for the door. Early on, it was not easy to find people to come and work here [because of] the cost of living [and] moving to a big city environment.

PITT: And yet you said that you did have Reynolds and did have a team of people who were eager to set things out in general.

CHANDLER: Yes, we were able to pull in some people who really wanted to come here. They were excited about the prospect of a new area, and saw it as a great career development opportunity. But it was not like recruiting for Yosemite or Sequoia or some of the more traditional parks. People in the Park Service, particularly lower-graded people, like park rangers and interpreters, looked at this and said, It might be interesting, but I just can't take my family there. I can't afford it. I can live in other parts of this country and do quite well. And we were able to get some local recruiting authority, because then we could hire some local people. That was useful. Let's see. I'm rambling, trying to think of other things.

PITT: This is a terrific beginning and why don't I let you pause and I'll ask you some questions that will get you back on track. Would you like us to turn this off and take a drink of water, and start again?

CHANDLER: You can keep going.

PITT: In Sacramento, Assemblyman Howard Berman sponsored a bill forming what was called then the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Advisory Commission. Not a permanent agency, like the Coastal Commission, but an advisory one. How did that interact with your work and your commission?

CHANDLER: Very little. I remember it being established and my sense was that it was [set up] more to deal with state issues within the Santa Monica Mountains, rather than being an advisory group to advise the federal role, so that there was very little interaction. I attended some of the meetings and so forth, but the advisory commission that I was most focused on was the one that was required by the [SMMNRA] authorizing legislation.

PITT: The federal legislation.

CHANDLER: Right.

PITT: Well, let's talk about the commission that you worked with. In April, 1980, the first meeting was held. It had nine members. Why don't we focus on that a little bit? I gather that the Secretary of Interior appointed the members, but you must have had some input in picking them. I think my questions are these: What was your input; what were their qualifications; what interests in the community did they represent; and how did they function? If you like I can read their names to you.

CHANDLER: I think I remember most of them.

PITT: What I have is Norman Miller as chair, Marvin Braude from the City Council of Los Angeles, Sarah Dixon, Henry Gray, Mary Hernandez, Michael Levitt, Susan Nelson, Cary Peck, and Marilyn Whaley Winters.

CHANDLER: Yes, much of what I wanted to achieve was to have some representation from all of the jurisdictions. There was a lot of interest by some of the people that you just read wanting to be on, because they cared about the Santa Monicas, wanted to have a role in the outcome of putting it together. I met with all of them in advance of their appointments to determine their interest and get a fix on how they might contribute as part of the board. I particularly worked with Norm Miller, because we felt he would be a good chair.

PITT: What were his qualifications?

CHANDLER: Well, he was professor emeritus at UCLA. Seemed to have a good balance. He wasn't identified as a strong environmentalist. He wasn't a developer. He came from an academic background, but knew a lot of folks, and had a good personality, good style. He seemed to have the right qualities to chair a group of people with different

interests. So he was picked as the chair. I worked pretty actively with him. The others are all folks we wanted to make sure we had diversity in the group--we wanted both men and women, Hispanic and black. We had that.

PITT: When you say, "we," did you develop the list of nominees for this commission? And you submitted it to. . .

CHANDLER: Yes. [Names were advanced from the respective jurisdictions, as required by the enabling legislation, and a final list was assembled for appointment by the secretary of the Interior.]

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Please continue, Bob.

CHANDLER: Dr. Gray was advanced by one of the county supervisors in Ventura. Some of the people went to members of Congress, like Tony Beilenson, and said they'd like to be [appointed]. The names came from various sources. Sue Nelson, of course, was recognized as the person who was most active in establishing the legislation, and worked hard with Tony Beilenson, Phil Burton, and others.

PITT: How about Braude? What was your take on him and his participation?

CHANDLER: Of course, Marvin was a very strong supporter of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and had been active in pushing for the Comprehensive Planning Commission. I see him as certainly one of the strong advocates for broader preservation in the Santa Monica Mountains, and always see him as a good friend and somebody who was willing to work hard and spend time beyond his official duties as a city councilman in support of the Santa Monica Mountains. So, just a real solid advocate for what we were trying to do, a good, good friend. Among the city councilmen he would be Number One in terms of the person who was always willing to step up in support. His history in support of the Santa Monicas went well [before] the recreation area was established.

PITT: Back into the '70s?

CHANDLER: Yes.

PITT: After a while a Peter Ireland was added to your commission. Two people had resigned for ill-health or what have you. Peter Ireland came from Supervisor [Deane]

Dana's office. Now he probably would not have been as staunch a defender of the recreation area and the federal presence. Am I right in surmising that?

CHANDLER: Certainly that was true initially. Peter Ireland was one of the most active opponents, and, if not the originator, was a very active leader in Concerned Citizens for Property Rights.

PITT: What I have for [the name of] one of them [organizations] is, Advocates for Better Coastal Development, but that's not the one you're talking about?

CHANDLER: I think it was Concerned Citizens for Property Rights.

PITT: Okay.

CHANDLER: And he was involved in challenging the federal role and was one of the most active people early on. He later got a position with Supervisor Dana and then came on to our commission. But I think through the process he was really eager to learn and understand. So he pulled together a lot of information and kind of sorted it through. He also listened to all sides. So, I think there was a sort of inner learning process.

PITT: Learning, and changing his mind?

CHANDLER: And changing to some degree. I think he was still a strong advocate for property rights, as was the supervisor, but I think he began to look at some of the benefits associated with public land and public use opportunities for a higher quality of life. Those were the kind of things initially he didn't hear at all. He was most concerned with a government takeover and federal control, and some of those kinds of things. An interesting change. In fact, as you look at the effect of Charles Cushman in this area, he clearly did not have the impact here that he had in some other areas around the country. He came in and met with some of the groups and threw out his message for banding together--"These are some of things you need. You need to file freedom of information requests." But it didn't really take.

PITT: Let's see. The idea of James Watt and the Sagebrush Rebellion as it applied to the national parks--tell me if I've got this right: That the recreation areas had no business being there to begin with. They were to be given over to the states . . .

CHANDLER: Yes.

PITT: . . . disassembled perhaps and put into state hands, and [it] did have quite an impact, let's say, in Cuyahoga Valley [National Recreation Area] in Ohio, and somewhere else, perhaps. But you're saying that when they started up here it didn't go over very big with the local people.

CHANDLER: I think there were a couple of things. One was the work of Charles Cushman, who was active in kind of stirring anti-federal sentiment among regular folks that owned property. He was a fear monger. He is still at it.

PITT: Really.

CHANDLER: Yes, about the federal government, and particularly the national parks. He'd done some work in national forests, but mostly national parks. But at the same time at the political level, with the [Ronald] Reagan election, and Jim Watt coming in as secretary [of the Interior], it's clear that he believed that a lot of these areas were unworthy of being in the National Park System. That was his position, clearly. He had worked early in his career with the federal government in the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and so he had some background in understanding federal recreation and what the federal government's role should be. But he wanted to divest the system of places like the Santa Monica Mountains, and it was at a time, too, when the economy was starting to hurt and he saw these as big drains on the system. In fact, that attitude was not only brought by Watt. I think a lot of people in the Park Service had some concern about, Can we afford something like the Santa Monica Mountains? Is it going to be huge drain on the system?

PITT: What was your personal take if he came to a meeting? What was your response to him, the fear monger? And what was your response to the people in the National Park Service about [their] fears that they couldn't afford it?

CHANDLER: My conversation with people in the Park Service was to point out the great job that we were doing in San Francisco in Golden Gate National Recreation Area--[those] areas that had been brought into the system earlier and were now flourishing and were popular. Certainly members of Congress liked having units of the National Park System in their districts. There was clearly a very strong benefit to having units of the National Park System in your state, in your district. And the greater the support and popularity of these places, the greater the insurance that they were going to be taken care of over time. So I think there was a political angle that a lot of people just didn't see. If you were in a park and your budget was somehow less than what we had hoped and you see a new very expensive unit coming on, all you think of is somehow that's going to draw all the money and attention, and I'm still going to be out here with not much of it. But as you track the record of appropriations for the National Parks, with the addition of many areas like Santa Monica Mountains, and Gateway in New York, and Cuyahoga, and Indiana Dunes, and you take a look at these areas that are considered urban recreation areas, I mean, the budget has grown. And early on there was one director, George Hartzog who felt very strongly that you look at the political strength of the California delegation and to have places in San Francisco and L.A. that can be supported by a delegation ensures that you are going to have the attention of Congress when it comes to the National Park System.

PITT: Following the dictum of one Speaker of the House who said that, "All politics is local."

CHANDLER: "Local"--yes, absolutely. And how many districts are in L.A.? I mean, that's a very potent opportunity to build support. And a lot of the support that we've seen in legislative actions related to the Santa Monicas doesn't just deal with the members of Congress that are here [in the mountain area], but those that are in the region who recognize that it has value. So that was an important element. And while there was some hand wringing about this, I think over time that kind of died down. It was almost an immediate reaction. I mean the Presidio of San Francisco which I worked on--the same thing. Here was a little piece of real estate in San Francisco that has a budget larger than any of the national parks. It's just hard to grasp.

Let me talk a little bit about Jim Watt and that whole thing--how it played out--because that was an important part of the dynamic that was going on here. It [the Recreation Area] was established during the Carter Administration. We had a strong person in Phil Burton. They were able to get initial money. I think Phil Burton really wanted to be Speaker of the House. So he was interested in doing whatever he could to support people in Southern California. All of that dynamic really helped in getting some initial money coming to begin the process of putting this together. Then when Reagan came in, Watt came in. Even at the end of the Carter administration, they were starting to tighten up the funding mechanism for the Santa Monica Mountains, and clearly as we moved into the Reagan administration you could just see the faucet being turned down even more in terms of funding for operations and everything.

The idea of divesting, it was interesting. One of the people who wrote a letter to Jim Watt when he was secretary was the former director of California State Parks, Bill Mott, who was instrumental in establishing a lot of the state parks in the Santa Monicas. He wrote a letter to Jim Watt agreeing that it shouldn't be a federal entity, that it probably could be a state [entity] but it shouldn't be a federal recreation area. And then Bill Mott became director of the National Park Service, which is kind of an interesting flip. That letter, I saw a copy of it, but it was never circulated very widely. I think by that time he was supporting the fact that everything in the system belonged in the system, because he was sitting in a different chair. But with the idea that the National Recreation Area was under attack by the administration had a very interesting effect on their staff. I mean the people here were just working their hearts out to figure out how to put this together, to get it on the map, to make it a reality. They were just working long hours and there was a lot of energy and spirit caught up in making things happen. It was new, it was exciting and there was a lot of energy flowing around it, and suddenly we have an administration and the Secretary of the Interior saying it's not worth it, get rid of it. But instead of creating a kind of depression effect it really pulled the troops together. I mean, there was a very strong feeling that we're going to save this place. We are going to make it happen regardless of what the administration says.

PITT: Did people say as much as that at meetings and in conversation?

CHANDLER: Oh yes. I think there was a clear sense that we are going to tough this out, we are going to show that this will work. It kind of bordered on subversion in some ways. I mean, we were working actively with the editorial board of the *L.A. Times* to get stories

in the editorials, because we knew that Reagan was reading the *L.A. Times* in the White House.

We also could get critical stories in the *L.A. Times* about activities and what was going on here, and some of the value of the place. We'd take reporters out, walk the hills.

PITT: So you got good press coverage.

CHANDLER: Great press.

PITT: *The Daily News* also?

CHANDLER: Yes. All of the local newspapers were great. We were even able to pull a lot of good TV coverage from some of the networks to talk about this. So at the time that this threat was occurring we were finding more and better ways to communicate nationally about the value of this place.

PITT: So, were you following Phil Burton's advice, young man?

CHANDLER: Yes! [laughter] Absolutely! I have to say it was fun. I mean there was a challenge in that, and all of us felt the challenge, to figure out how to make this thing happen. We had the *CBS Evening News* out to do a piece. This was Jerry Bowen doing the interviewing and we were sitting on a picnic table and we were talking for a half hour. I knew where he was going. He was trying to get me to be critical of the administration, and I was dancing around trying to answer his questions in the strongest possible way [by] talking about the value of the place and why it's important to the millions of people who live within an hour of this place. And at one point he posed the question, "What would happen if this just doesn't happen, there is no more money, there is no support for it, and there is no Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area?" And I said, "I think it would be a very short-sighted action, based on the needs and the future and so forth."

And the next morning I had a call from the assistant secretary wondering why I had said that on national TV. So I danced around and said, "Well it was a long interview. I said a lot of other things." But it was like, "Young man you better watch what you are saying." There was really a sense of threat at that time. In some ways it was the best of times and the worst of times.

PITT: Do you want to mention some of the people who worked with you who were in your camp at the time?

CHANDLER: John Reynolds was absolutely great as a planner and a can-do person--very optimistic. Bill Anderson, who has left the Park Service but still lives in the area, was a great help. Ruth Kilday, who did a lot of the public affairs stuff, was terrific. Marti Leicester, who is now the Associate Regional Director in San Francisco, was an interpretive and outreach person. She was great. Mary Scott, who had worked for L.A. County. Everyone tried to figure out how to make this thing work well.

One of the things that Secretary [Watt] was interested in early in his tenure was the idea of gift catalogues for parks. They were a kind of trendy thing, where you put out a catalogue of things. It's a way of soliciting donations from companies and individuals about [ways] to help, sort of a private-sector support. And when I heard that I said, "Great! We're going to have the first one." So I pulled Bill Anderson aside and said, "Bill, this is your job, let's get it done, the clock's ticking. I don't want anybody to have one of these on the street before we have." [laughter] Because I figured if [Watt] was such a strong proponent of that, and was pushing it so strongly, that for us to get the first one out and get some play on it would help blunt his criticism of Santa Monica. So we did. We put together a great one, got it out and made sure it came out just before Christmas, like in November. And we had all three networks do a piece on it, and *CNN*. In one day they all came and did this piece. It was terrific. [laughter]

PITT: Did Ronald Reagan buy one? Isn't it a little surprising? He lived right here and I believe his land was part of the area. And yet, where did he stand as far as you were concerned?

CHANDLER: Invisible. I don't recall any support or connections where we felt that [President] Reagan could be helpful. One of the early Reagan ranches was right south of Paramount Ranch. He had a little piece of property there. So we thought maybe as [he was] president from Southern California--maybe it was high hopes--but with Watt in and some of the things that started happening it was pretty clear . . .

PITT: Did anybody actually go and knock on his door?

CHANDLER: Not that I am aware of. The strongest support that we had was Democratic. [Robert] Lagomarsino [Republican of Ventura] was guardedly supportive. Barry Goldwater Jr. was supportive pretty much, but he was kind of a wild card. We never quite knew where he was going to come down on the issues. I went to a number of meetings that he had set up where property owners would go to him and ask for him to intercede on their behalf. The Broomes that live way up in Ventura County were concerned because we had included some of their ranch lands in the recreation area. So I was summoned to a meeting to sit down over lunch and talk over why their property should not be included. I just accepted that as part of what I had to deal with, that there was going to be some political pressure. And yet I was never told, Don't do that, or Do it differently. I would make my case.

PITT: This is the Broome family?

CHANDLER: Yes. But there were other situations where I went to meetings and people were trying to encourage me to essentially back off. Paramount Ranch was a good example.

PITT: You never seemed to waver in your belief and in your enthusiasm for the recreation area.

CHANDLER: No.

PITT: Just building your arguments and moving right along. You never wavered.

CHANDLER: Yes, you have to. If it looks like you're wishy-washy in terms of what the area should be or what the direction should be, you might as well pack up and go someplace else. I think we made tremendous strides in the first few years. The good team, hard work. I think in some ways the threats that we had during the Watt years helped solidify support for the place. It was kind of an interesting dynamic.

PITT: Did you have support from your immediate superiors in the Park Service in the Interior Department?

CHANDLER: Yes, I did. I had good support in the Park Service. Not great support in the Department of Interior. There was Bill Whalen, of course, who left as director, and then Russ Dickenson came in as director, who was very supportive. And we had the regional director in San Francisco, [Howard Chapman] who was supportive, although he was not really an urban recreation person. He was more of a big National Park person and I think he was very happy to have me figure out how to do it and make the decisions. Which was great for me. The last thing I needed was to have a group of people at the regional level second guessing decisions or running up there every week to see what I should do. It was one of the beauties of the job, essentially, is that I had [support].

PITT: Did you work directly with Tony Beilenson?

CHANDLER: Yes, absolutely.

PITT: You must have had a lot of good support.

CHANDLER: Good support. Linda Friedman and Joanie [Brandt (?)], in his office. But Linda, particularly, was a very good support person. I worked with her all the time, developing strategy, dealing with the issues, because Tony was rightfully recognized as the key congressional person for the Santa Monica Mountains. So people would frequently go to his office with a grievance or a concern, but they understood clearly that he was very supportive. He would have loved to have had more money to buy land more quickly and get it all done, because he was solidly behind what we were trying to do. I always felt very good support from him. He was great.

PITT: Now you've mentioned the grassroots, of course. That's one of the main things here. What more could you say, first of all, about the Sierra Club and how it responded and secondly, the Friends [of the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore] and Susan Nelson?

CHANDLER: Well, they were all very strong supporters. As in dealing with environmental organizations in any park situation that I've experienced, there are times when they're your strongest ally and strongest friend. There are other times when they

may not like the decisions you make and want to take you in a different direction. And that was true here as well. On balance, they were with us; they were trying to help us. We weren't always in a position where we could match the rhetoric that they were able to share with the public, and the newspapers, and others. But it's a very important thing to have them out there pushing as hard as they can for the strongest possible protection for the area. Both the Sierra Club--Lou Levy. . . I didn't deal a lot with him initially, but he, I think, became a president of one of the local chapters of the Sierra Club and became more active. Another person that was a very strong advocate--still is--is Dave Brown. He just works tirelessly and has a lot of ideas. He would come into the office two or three times a week with some idea, some piece of property. He would research things and he was great. He might drive you crazy, but he was great.

PITT: Do I have this wrong or right? That initially the Sierra Club did not have great faith in the recreation area concept, that they thought that it was misguided as an urban park. Or perhaps that's an incorrect perception.

CHANDLER: I don't recall that perception.

PITT: So, in your time, certainly, that was not the case.

CHANDLER: I think that they were all joyous that there was legislation passed, that there was going to be land acquisition money to buy more open space and park land. So if there was an initial reservation about the concept of a national recreation area, I think that became less of an issue as other things came into focus, like which lands to buy. Clearly the environmental community always shared with me their opinions about where the priorities ought to be, which things were important or not important.

PITT: I read of one controversy about setting the boundary--you were mentioning the importance of this issue of setting the boundary--of whether to set it north or south of Conejo Peak on Potrero Road. Can you tell me what that was all about? Why that was a controversy, and how it came out?

CHANDLER: I'm trying to think where that is. [Looking at a photo blow-up] Is that by Lake Sherwood?

PITT: I would know it better on a map than a photograph.

CHANDLER: Let's look at the park map, which might be an easier way. I've got one of those.

PITT: I think I'm going to stop this for one second while we look at the map. [machine off briefly, and then turned back on]. So, it doesn't ring a bell so much right now as Conejo Peak and Potrero Road. But you are remembering another controversy, are you?

CHANDLER: Well, Lake Sherwood. It was an area where the people that lived around Lake Sherwood wanted all of the area around Lake Sherwood included in the recreation

area, and it was not initially [included]. In looking at the amount of development that was already there, I decided that we were not going to include that. So there was great deal of anger by some of the people in Lake Sherwood that we had somehow not agreed to adjust the boundary to include all of Lake Sherwood. And that was one of the hot issues. We went around the whole boundary, kind of making the final decisions on which properties [should] be in or out, or which hydrographic divide to follow, or contour to follow. Those were just decisions that were made by getting out there and looking and making a determination on the ground as to whether they made sense.

PITT: In terms of the natural environment and configuration of the mountains.

CHANDLER: Yes, and what was already developed and what the potential was for certain pieces of land.

PITT: Now, in the original Act of 1978, I believe it was projected that $120 million should be spent for assembling land for this recreation area. You never got anywhere near the $120 million. How did you work with that? Was that something that gave you anxiety every day, or [something] you just went along with day by day?

CHANDLER: Well, I knew that it was not unusual that Congress authorizes a ceiling for land acquisition and you don't usually get up to the ceiling in the first few years, and in many cases the ceiling is increased over time. At the point that we were trying to put this together we weren't worried that we might not get the $125 [million], or that it might not come at all. But we were rather focused on what would be the best outcome for putting together a national recreation area, tying together the best of what's left, linking the state parks, [and] providing some recreational opportunities within this overall area that had been laid out by Congress. So I wasn't worried. I mean, the thing that worried me the most is [whether] any land acquisition money would come, and sure enough it dried up. And, of course, the property values continued to go up. So that [with] some of the opportunities that we would have had early on, if Congress had appropriated more money early in the process, we would have parkland today. That part of it was frustrating. But the fact that we had something to start with and could essentially get it going, so that people thought it real, was very helpful. In many cases parks are authorized and it may be a long time before they receive any appropriations for land acquisition.

PITT: In 1980 UCLA held a conference on archaeology in the recreation area, and [there] was a report issued by Joanne van Tilberg and Clement Meighan. What was your feeling about the archaeological significance of the recreation area and how it should be dealt with?

CHANDLER: It was clearly an important piece. One of the efforts that we focused on early in the process [was] to elevate the awareness of the values of the Santa Monica Mountains-- to talk about the archeological sites, the early Chumash culture that was here, as well as the natural values, the southern extent of the [San Fernando] Valley oaks that were disappearing in much of California, the limited Mediterranean ecosystem and how important that is globally--so that people living in and around the Santa Monicas

understood that this was more than just brush-covered hills that burned every now and then. There was some high quality value here [such as] the archeological sites, some of which were known, but clearly there were others that had not been discovered.

One of the interesting pieces that I worked on early on was a place [called] Saddle Rock Ranch, right at the intersection of Kanan and Mulholland. There's a camel-like peak up there that had some really nice rock art in it. It burned in the '78 fire and then it was purchased by Ron Semler. We had that as a high priority acquisition, because of the archeology there. It was clearly a place that was used by early inhabitants. It was another case where the property owner fought us tooth and nail, and actually ended up planting avocado trees. [He] actually hired Stewart Udall, former secretary of the Interior, to try to convince us to back off--which was an interesting little piece [of drama]--sitting across the table from Udall where he was questioning why we were including it. Udall heard our case and pretty soon Udall didn't work for Semler anymore. Yes, archeology was important. What we tried to do was to identify and promote to people, particularly in the L.A. region, the values that existed in the Santa Monica Mountains, which was largely unknown by most people. They just didn't connect to it. [One of our main tasks was to make it relevant to people living nearby.]

PITT: It's still not very well known, although I understand that to some extent you try to hide some of the petroglyphs or other sites because they have been defaced and ruined. There's a kind of trade-off there.

CHANDLER: It is a trade-off. And that was one of the arguments that some of the private property owners had, is that the sites are better protected in private ownership, rather than public ownership, because public access can lead to defacement, and so forth.

PITT: Now what about the [Santa Monica Mountains] Conservancy? What was your relationship with the Conservancy? Did you sit in on the meetings? And was it mostly cooperative, or were there major instances where you had disagreements with the Conservancy and [Executive Director] Joseph Edmiston?

CHANDLER: It was kind of a mixed bag. There were few situations where I would say we had disagreements. It was more of a competitive environment. Initially, the Conservancy evolved from the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission as a state entity to do many of the same things that we were doing at the federal level. And over time it became clear that we couldn't do everything that we might like as a federal entity, as the National Park Service. Joe Edmiston was very effective in working with the state Legislature to get support for the Conservancy.

So what evolved in the Santa Monica Mountains, and still persists today, is the recognition that there are a lot of players, each with [their own] roles. Sometimes there's overlap, but they're all serving a beneficial purpose in preserving and protecting the place and providing education programs. Clearly the Conservancy had tools that we didn't have. There were situations where we worked together, like the Peter Strauss property, where we had agreed that we would purchase that property from them, but they had the ability to go ahead and get it initially because we didn't have the land acquisition money. I had a lot of respect for Joe, because he was probably as politically sophisticated as

anybody I had ever worked with in figuring out how to work with Sacramento, and [he] worked local politics to build support for doing some things in the Santa Monica Mountains. I think the relationship developed in a very positive way. Initially I wasn't quite sure whether some of the work of the Conservancy was going to be helpful, or whether they were so focused on building their own identity and their own sense of value, that somehow it was somewhat competitive in terms of what they were trying to achieve and what we were trying to achieve.

PITT: But as your budget became more limited, it appeared to you as if they were doing good [things] that you couldn't be doing?

CHANDLER: Oh, absolutely. Yes, there's no question about that. Their help with the recreation transit program and bringing inner city kids into the Santa Monica Mountains is a good example. We worked with them on that, providing some interpreters, but there's enough need in the Santa Monica Mountains to go around.

PITT: Now you said earlier that you had condemnation authority. Did you ever use it? It was a threat, you said, and it was effective as a threat. Did you actually ever exercise it?

CHANDLER: We didn't use it as a threat, I guess is what I intended to say. [When asked directly if we had condemnation authority we would say, Yes. But also stress we would not use it unless there was a compelling cause to do so. When Watt came it would have been difficult if not impossible to get a condemnation approval. Another factor was, as long as we had willing sellers, it did not make sense to tie up precious money in a condemnation action.]

PITT: I see.

CHANDLER: Although when pressed, the fact is that it existed. I think it was somehow perceived as a threat, a threat that was in our back pocket, perhaps, that could be used. I can't recall if we ever used it. I don't think so. I would have to go back and look at [the record].

PITT: You're saying it never was a realistic prospect to condemn on the Church Universal? That was never a real prospect, that you were going to do that?

CHANDLER: Yes. I mean it was discussed but I think in the final analysis it was not something that we wanted to do or could do. The down side of that--also in terms of the time it would take and the limited money we had, and the cost of that property--was such that it just wasn't in the cards. You can't go forward with a condemnation action unless you have the funds available to carry it through.

PITT: In 1983 George Deukmejian became governor, who was not noted for his strong environmental leanings. Did that affect your work in any way?

CHANDLER: No. We didn't have any affect that I can recall from that. I mean we didn't have a whole lot of support from Jerry Brown, for that matter. I remember meeting with Jerry Brown one day on Calamigos Ranch. I still have a picture where I'm pointing my finger at him, encouraging him to be more active in supporting a lot of the work that we were doing in the Santa Monica Mountains, and trying to get his attention, because he was not very visible in supporting what we were doing there.

PITT: And could you tell why? Or it was simply not there.

CHANDLER: It was just not there as far as I could tell. I mean he was involved in other things. It seems like it would be the kind of thing that he would have been behind. I don't think he was opposing it in any way, but he wasn't stepping forward and saying, This is really something we need to get after.

PITT: I interviewed Tony Beilenson and he said in his interview that the [Los Angeles] County Supervisors were particularly negligent in preserving open space. In fact, that if they had done their work that maybe there wouldn't have had to be a national recreation area. How do you regard the county supervisors during your time? What do you think of that comment of his?

CHANDLER: I think that's really true. There was a lot of pro-development sentiment on the board, particularly L.A. County. Ventura County by contrast was far more preservation oriented and much more sensitive to preserving open space and recreation. L.A. County was very pro-development, and I think they were heavily influenced by many of the big developers in L.A. County, and that didn't change. I think there's some changes in supervisors, but they're still very much pro-development. Even in developing their land-use plan, the County Plan. The planners were trying to do a responsible job in recognizing the values, but it was a tough sell with the Board of Supervisors.

PITT: You mentioned that you developed the land plan after a couple of years, is that correct? And you published a . . .

CHANDLER: Yes, it was called a Land Protection Plan.

PITT: Tell us a little more about that. Are you satisfied in looking back over that plan as a good effort?

CHANDLER: Yes. It was a good effort. By the time we had developed that plan we had been on site long enough and knew the resource well enough, knew the opportunities, [and] had listened to enough people, [so] that the plan that we put together I felt very good about and felt it was on target. It was in some ways a tough sell with the [Reagan] administration. I remember going to Washington and briefing the assistant secretary on what we wanted to do and laying it out. They were of course very opposed to land acquisition in general. So arguing and presenting the best case was a tough sell, because they would have just as soon seen us say that the whole Santa Monica Mountains was just a cooperative planning area, where we have a designation as National Recreation Area,

but we really don't need any more public land. I mean, that was sort of the idea that they would have grasped immediately and gone with, but we really held tough to the fact that fee acquisition had to continue and we need[ed] to get the best of what's left in the Santa Monicas for the future.

PITT: Where did this toughness on your part come from? Is that just you, or something in your training, something in your career development, your parental background, your interaction with the world of nature?

CHANDLER: I don't think I have a reputation for toughness. I think that [it was] just in the kind of areas that I had worked in before I got here. I worked in Chicago in a lot of the newly developing National Recreation Areas--Indiana Dunes, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Apostle Islands, St. Croix National Riverway. So I was really familiar with a lot of what went into land acquisition, developing areas, the local politics, working with delegations [and] I understood that there had to be a very strong resolve in making it work. If it appears that you are stepping into something, but you don't have a goal, you're not really focused on what you want it to be, it undermines the ability to do some really good stuff. And this was such an appealing prospect, and still is. I mean it's still unfolding.

PITT: So, you stepped down in 1983. Was that a voluntary action on your part?

CHANDLER: It was.

PITT: Why did you step down, if it was so appealing and is still appealing?

CHANDLER: Well, in some ways I was getting kind of tired. But one of the positions that I had always wanted in the parks [was] Olympic National Park, since I worked up in the Pacific Northwest in the late '60s and early '70s, at Mt. Rainier. And I always looked at Olympic saying, Boy, this just has everything I'd really like to have. It was a career goal. When it opened up, I said, It's time to do it because I may never get a chance to do that again. So I went there.

PITT: So you had a very positive reason for that. Did you [also] have a negative one, like you thought maybe the Sagebrush Rebellion, or the James Watt philosophy was going to take over here, and it was going to limit your ability to work?

CHANDLER: No, no, I think by the time I left, I think the notion that this place was going to go belly up had passed.

PITT: I see.

CHANDLER: I think we had worked through that to a point where that threat was no longer imminent or in your face every minute. So, no, it wasn't a matter of trying to get away from just an untenable situation here. I think it was a feeling on my part that I had achieved what I came here to do--put together a general management plan, putting the place on the map. There's still a lot to be done. I mean, one of the things that continues to

be a problem is the amorphous nature of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as an entity. I mean, you don't see it. It's kind of bits and pieces connected with other things. It's a very different kind of park entity than you see in other places.

PITT: By way of conclusion, as you look back over your tenure, what was your proudest accomplishment, or your best decision, or decisions?

CHANDLER: Wow! I don't know. I guess bringing in some good people to work on this. I think that the caliber of people that we had as sort of the core staff to figure this out at the outset.

PITT: The land planning.

CHANDLER: Yes. Dave Taylor, the land acquisition guy; John Reynolds; we had Nancy Ehorn, a great planner.

End of Tape 1, Side B

Beginning of Tape 2, Side A

PITT: I [had] just asked a question [in] conclusion, and I interrupted you. I am sorry. About your proudest accomplishments.

CHANDLER: Well, I was saying that assembling a great team of people to figure this out and make it work--Dave Taylor for land acquisition, John Reynolds, Nancy Ehorn, and the planners that they pulled together were terrific. Dave Ochsner heading resource management, working hard to set up a GIS [Geographic Information System] system early on to identify and communicate the natural resource values here. Very important. He also brought in, I think, Phil Holmes at that time as an archaeologist to work here, so we were working on both the natural and cultural side. I think just getting a base established, beginning to develop an education program, reaching out to schools . . . Marti Leicester was terrific in helping with that. [William] Anderson was always just a great, high energy person to work with, an idea person. We just had a good team. That made working here a real joy. We worked hard and played hard, and got a lot done.

PITT: It's been 15 years or so since you left. What strikes you about the park now? Any surprises when you come back here to visit?

CHANDLER: Well, I think, Boy, it's a great building! [laughter] If I had had this building when I was here! We actually moved twice on Ventura Boulevard and then out to Agoura.

The thing that really caught my attention when I was here last, is that I saw the booklet that had been put together about the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and it listed all of the organizations and activities that are provided here. I think that one of the most compelling stories here is that this is a place that developed some of the first and most effective partnerships in how to manage national parks in urban areas.

PITT: A partnership between voluntary associations and the government?

CHANDLER: All kinds of partnerships, whether it's with other governmental entities, like state parks, county parks, city parks, the volunteer organizations that have a role, the foundations, the Conservancy. It seems like I counted there were like 20 different organizations that are providing some kind of program activity in the Santa Monica Mountains. I think when we first started this process we envisioned a much larger and more active federal role. I think over time, the realization is that the [Santa Monica Mountains] National Recreation Area has served as a catalyst to bring together a lot of organizations and individuals to figure out how to best use this resource to serve the greater good for people. I think it's shifted focus somewhat, but in a very positive way. And if you look around the country today, the word "partnerships" in relation to parks is something that's very, very common and used in many ways. I think the Santa Monica Mountains has really been a forerunner in how to do that.

PITT: So we're talking about a pioneering effort in the partnership undertaking for a National Recreation Area. You say that from your perspective, as you go around the country today in your activities, you would say that this was a pioneering effort.

CHANDLER: I think so. Yes, absolutely. I mean, it was happening in other places, but the scale of what's happening here and the number of partners is greater than I have seen anywhere else.

PITT: Tell us just a little bit more about what you do now.

CHANDLER: I'm working mostly as a counselor or senior advisor to the National Park Foundation, which is an organization that was established in 1967 as the official fund-raising arm for the National Park Service. And so I assist them in a number of ways, largely in connecting the National Park Service with the foundation and finding ways that we can either help build local capacity for private sector support through fund raising, or in some cases working on major projects of the National Park Foundation that can support parks. This park has benefited in a number of ways from National Park Foundation grants--the Canon Grants for studying the bobcats and megafauna, trail projects, American Air Lines. So those are the things I'm doing. I'm also on the board of the Grand Canyon National Park Foundation which is a local friends group or foundation that is working on a number of projects at Grand Canyon. I've done a few other park-related activities since I retired.

PITT: Let's say we come back here 15 years from now. What are we going to find?

CHANDLER: Well, I'm hoping that we'll find more public land, that there's still a lot of work to be done in tying together some of the pieces that still need to be acquired. I think the whole Zuma-Trancas block is the other big hunk that is little by little being acquired. The Backbone Trail will be completed, and people will know it, enjoy it. The Land-Water Conservation Fund will be fully funded at its optimal level, so that there will be more money even though the land prices are high. They're not going to get any lower. So, it's so relative. I mean, the prices today are so different from when we started 15 years ago, but are only going in one direction. As someone said, "There ain't any more left!" [laughter] I think it's going to continue to mature. I think the partnership arrangements between all of the governmental entities will mature, and work well. From what I can see and hear, it's already working well, and I think it will get better. So I think that people who live in and around this area, as they get to know the area and use it, will really feel good about the foresight of people like Tony Beilenson, and Marvin Braude, and Sue Nelson, Margot Feuer, and Jill Swift, and the other people that early on were doing the fight to save this place. I think that its intrinsic value will only increase in time. So 15 years from now I think that'll be more in focus than it is today.

PITT: Your upbeat attitude is very heartwarming. And I want to thank you again, and I want to congratulate you for your contributions in preserving the Santa Monica Mountains, and for taking the time to make this--I think--very, very useful interview.

CHANDLER: Well, thank you. It's been a pleasure.

End of Tape 2, Side A

End of Interview

— V —

SAVING A MEDITERRANEAN BIOME

An Interview with Dale Crane

Dale Crane, trained in zoology and wildlife management, worked as an environmental planner for Rep. Phillip Burton in 1978. Following his retirement in 1990, he chaired the National Park Trust. He was interviewed by telephone on January 26, 1998 at his home in Seattle, Washington.

Interviewee: Dale Crane
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: Let me ask you, Dale, a background type of question, something that sets the stage here. Can you tell us something about your own background--where you were born, raised, educated, and how you got to do what you were doing in Congress, and perhaps, briefly, what you have been doing since around 1978.

CRANE: Well, I was born and raised in Washington state, went to school at Oregon State, majored in zoology and wildlife management. From there I went to California in a natural history museum, subsequently to the California State Parks, to the California Department of Water Resources doing recreation and economic studies on the California water plan. From there [I went] to the [Army] Corps of Engineers, establishing the first environmental planning and research group for the Corps of Engineers--this was in Sacramento. Subsequently, [I went] to the division office in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was then tapped to head up the Natural Resources Management Program for the chief of engineers in Washington, D.C., which I was at for a number of years.

I was then tapped under a scholarship program by the American Political Science Association to spend a year on Capitol Hill, at which time I worked for [Rep.] Phil [Phillip] Burton and [Sen.] Dale Bumpers. The Omnibus [Parks] Bill was an outgrowth of a need to clean out an enormous backlog of parks and recreation issues and the knowledge I had of omnibus bills that had been historic for the Corps of Engineers.

After [the] Phil Burton assignment, after the passage of the Omnibus Bill, I went to the Senate and worked for Dale Bumpers and worked on the passage of the bill in the Senate. I returned at Phil Burton's request to work for him and subsequently undertook direct employment on the Hill and left the Corps of Engineers, and worked for Phil while he was chairman of the Subcommittee [on National Parks and Insular Affairs], worked for [John F.] Seiberling when he was chair, and worked for Bruce [F.] Vento for a number of years when he was chair.

I retired in 1990, came back to Seattle, worked for five years as a northwest regional representative for the National Parks and Conservation Association, and then finally retired for good--from work anyway. I am currently chairman of the National Park Trust, a public nonprofit organization that purchases lands and donates it to the National Park System.

PITT: I see. That's quite a dossier, and obviously you were well trained and had the experience to do work on this bill. That's a very thorough answer to my first question. I appreciate it. What I'd like you to do is take your time and talk about your role in shaping the legislation, not worrying about whether it's in chronological order, or anything like that. Take 5, 10, or 15, some people will take as much as 20 minutes--so that you'll have a chance to tell your story in as complete a fashion as possible. I'll take some notes and then I will ask you some questions. So if you're ready to go with that why don't you just tell us your story about this Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation bill and legislation of 1978?

CRANE: Well, Leonard, let me first try to put it in context with the Omnibus Parks Bill. The Omnibus Parks Bill is the largest accumulation of legislation affecting parks, wild and scenic rivers, [and] national trails that was ever put together before that time and nothing similar to it has ever been tried since. It just happened to be the right time for something like this to go through the Congress. This Santa Monica Mountains legislation was one small part of this huge package, so I will have to say I have very blurred memories in many areas of the bill.

PITT: That's quite understandable.

CRANE: We did it very quickly. Well, I shouldn't say very quickly, but we put the bill together from all these different sources. And the process in the House was one of intense pressures and obviously very, very long days.

The bill was brought up by Phil Burton. I was asked to work with Gail Osherenko who was Beilenson's staff person on the bill. There was great, great dissension over this bill, coming primarily from the administration. The Park Service, and I use that term generally, but there were certainly elements, major elements of the Park Service, that were deeply opposed to the bill. Since the administration was of the same party that then controlled the House of Representatives, we tried very hard to accommodate their wishes, and finally reached a point of having to say, "No. This bill is appropriate and we intend to do it."

They had two basic objections to the bill. One that many of us shared was the area of national significance. [It was] one of the prime screens that we put in any proposal for a national park unit. I went out and looked at the area, I had been familiar with it from my years in California and went out and looked at it again. [I] strongly felt that [it was] a representation of a type of Mediterranean biome that probably existed nowhere else in the United States, but if there was anything of a similar nature it was very, very small. That alone in my mind was a basis for making it a national recreation area, and for trying to preserve some of the character of the area from a biological standpoint.

The second was consideration of the area as a national recreation area. It was essentially a recreational backyard for Los Angeles. Was it appropriate for the federal government to establish such an area [and] operate it [and] maintain it at federal expense? This is important because later the language of the bill developed [as] an integration of state and local cooperation with the federal government.

[There was a] third level of concern, that of operation and maintenance. How could an area this large, so much of it privately owned, chopped up by roads and subdivisions, how could that possibly be administered in some cohesive manner? Park Service had deep concerns about that and I think they were absolutely right. No one had ever tried anything quite like that before except as was taking place up in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and at Gateway in New York, both of which were not nearly as fractured as this was. Having all those concerns, we chose to sit down and try to work with them. And I have to say that Gail Osherenko was fantastic. She was an incredibly solid professional person.

There were major elements of the Congress, by the way, that were very opposed to this bill for any number of reasons. I should say, [members] of the House of Representatives were very opposed to the Santa Monica Mountains and various elements of the bill. Fortunately, there was a significant bipartisan support from Southern California for it. Not only Beilenson but [Barry] Goldwater [Jr.] and Bob [Robert J.] Lagomarsino, who was a powerful Republican on our committee, and he strongly supported Goldwater on this. So we had that going for us. The lobbying groups that worked on this--Susan Nelson who was constantly there and constantly working on the bill, and another lady named Margot Feuer--were very effective. We, in essence, convinced them that they should spend their time talking to the opponents of the bill and doing whatever they could, not only to bring over the opposition but especially to bring the people that didn't have any strong feelings into the plus column so that we could depend on their votes. Which they did. Which they did well.

Gail and I would work on the language of the legislation. Essentially, they would provide what they wanted done, and we would try to work out the language as best we could. There were many elements they wanted that were just literally impossible to do. The ones we threw away I have to say I can't remember. I do remember many long arguments, especially with Susan, about what we could and couldn't do there. One of the big problems we had was drawing the boundaries of the recreation area itself, and [of] the Santa Monica Mountains impact zone. Those boundaries were very, very controversial for any number of reasons. There was just seemingly an underlying opposition from the conservative elements in Los Angeles County that were opposed to this and they were constantly throwing bombs and [we had] to deal with those.

Let me go through the sequence. We did put the legislation language together. Everybody, in some cases reluctantly, signed on to it. The Secretary of Interior was opposed. He did not get a letter of opposition up to the Hill for various reasons, which helped our case. The vote in the committee went very well, obviously, and the Omnibus Parks and Recreation Bill went out of committee very quickly and very well. It went to the floor. There was several days of debate on the bill, some serious battles over certain elements of it. One of them took, as I recall, a day-and-a-half or two days to get through and that was on the Delaware River water gap which was, in effect, de-authorizing a major water project. When the vote came down, it was very favorable. We had a very high level of approval. I forget the exact vote, but it was overwhelming. There was little or no controversy regarding Santa Monica Mountains. The people in the area, the members that were in the area got up and strongly supported it. As I recall, [Rep. Keith G.] Sebelius, who was a ranking minority Republican member of the committee, got up on the floor and said some things about the Santa Monica Mountains. He was not

convinced and felt there were a lot of things that he didn't know about the area. The way the bill was put together was new, it had never been done before by the various elements of government and he wasn't sure about that. He wasn't sure about how it could work and how the Park Service could operate it. All of which were valid concerns.

[The bill] went to the Senate. California senators, as I recall, were generally for it. Senator [Alan] Cranston pushed it hard. Senator [Henry] Jackson was very opposed to it. In essence, he was very opposed for the same reasons that were expressed by Sebelius. But in addition, in the Senate, they have other traditions than the House, and are called the upper body, I guess, for those reasons. But [they] had deep concerns because this was going to place so much money in the state of California in combination with other parts of the bill. They tended to look at a balance between the states--how many dollars went to each state for various things. I remember staff people being terribly concerned about that and I think we finally overcame it. They, of course, cut the money. I can't remember how much they cut it but as I recall it was rather significant. The whole Omnibus Bill nearly died in the Senate by inaction, which is tradition for the Senate. So we were able to stimulate discussions between the subcommittee chairman, [James] Abourezk and Phil Burton, and the bill started moving. It moved very, very quickly once it started in the Senate. I worked on that as Dale Bumpers' staff person over there and again the Santa Monica Mountains took very little of our time. There were other elements of the bill that took a lot more time. I think that's a fair summary, at least a summary of my recollection of how the bill, or the Santa Monica Mountains portion of it, proceeded.

PITT: Right. That's a very good summary. So your responsibilities were to be talking with staff people such as Osherenko, and community people such as Nelson, and other members of Congress . . .

CRANE: And the administration.

PITT: . . . and the administration. I read in John Jacobs' biography of Phil Burton, *A Rage for Justice*,[4] that Burton was a political genius, and he does refer to this bill. What were your impressions of Burton? If you're familiar with the book, does it portray the situation accurately?

CRANE: In my mind Burton is one of the legislative heroes of the century. He had such an incredible mind. He could retain details that would just overwhelm you. Nothing passed his notice. And I've known people like that before but I've never known one who could take that incredible knowledge that he had and put it together in such a way that everything worked. And his ability of being able to understand his colleagues' needs and wishes was without parallel. In this Omnibus Bill I think I had the opportunity of watching that genius work where it had the full field to work, not just in little ways but the full field of integrating the kinds of things that people wanted. But more importantly in the things that people never think about or the things that weren't included. He always told me knowing that I had a technical background and knew very little about politics, he told me that my role was to tell him what the best answer was and then he'd worry about

[4] *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phil Burton* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

the politics. And he did that in this legislation and subsequently in other bills when I was working directly for him. I was just always amazed at his ability to put things together.

I see these books and the things that have been written about him. They're always put together on an undercurrent of his activities being [based on] personal ambition. That was true to a degree. But what hasn't been said is that he had such a strong commitment to helping people. He was not an environmentalist but he perceived that the protection of open space and parks, and things of that nature, for people were absolutely essential and would become more so as our population grew. He felt that was why he should put his time and energy into environmental issues in making these things happen. He's been accused of doing the Omnibus Bill to build his power in the House and that sort of thing, and maybe that's true. But it is only part of the equation. I can tell you how it started. I'm the one that said we ought to do it. It worked for Water Projects and it should work for Parks. That's how it started. And he did it. And maybe it built his power but it also did something that nobody had been able to do, which was clean up a backlog that the public with low political powers, public Joe Blow, wanted done.

PITT: Do you remember the exact moment, or circumstance, where you were talking to him about this? Can you set a little picture?

CRANE: Well, it was, as all of our discussions were, at night, in his office. We always went to his office, practically every night of the week around six o'clock or so, and worked on issues until such time as we could get out of there. He was very much a night person. And then I'd be really fortunate if he didn't wake me up at two o'clock with a phone call because he was still working. And, you know, the exact circumstance I can't tell you, but I do remember we were sitting around talking about all these bills that had piled up one night. Not that he wouldn't have done it anyway. I mean, it's very common for people to react to what has been successful in other areas, and I'm sure that eventually a big omnibus bill like this would have happened. But I think I was there with a background from the Corps of Engineers and simply was able to maybe coalesce his thinking a little bit.

PITT: Right. So you gave him the omnibus idea and he definitely ran with it and it was, as you say, out of ambition but also out of principle.

CRANE: Indeed. Now specifically in terms of what Jacobs wrote about the Santa Monica Mountains, I don't remember--I read his book some time ago--and I just don't remember what he said about the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: Well, it was not an extensive portion. You were mentioned. At one point he does say that when Carter stuck the Chattahoochee River on the bill, that gave Burton the clue on how to do a little trade here, and I think the trade-off was the Santa Monica Mountains. I don't have the book in front of me, but that is one thing I seem to recall that John Jacobs was saying about Burton and this bill.

CRANE: That may be valid, but I think it was more that the entire bill, the Omnibus Parks and Recreation Bill gained some warm responses in the White House over the secretary's objections, because of Chattahoochee.

PITT: He also mentions that Burton and his wife had honeymooned or had been through the Santa Monicas at the time they were first married and he had a kind of a sentimental attachment to it.

CRANE: Yes. Mostly the seashore. But he also knew Susan Nelson's husband. I believe he knew Susan and her husband. There was some association there that I'm unclear on. But there was some relationship from the past and he very much wanted to help Susan on this. I'm not so sure he wanted to help Beilenson.

PITT: Jacobs does raise this issue of the conflict, or the implied conflict between Beilenson and Burton. What can you tell us about that and about Beilenson's role in putting together the bill?

CRANE: Being the Democrat, Beilenson certainly had a strong role in putting it together through Gail. A strong political role I never saw. If he did political work on it, I don't know of it. The political work that was so helpful to the bill was on the Republican side and it was done by Lagomarsino and Goldwater. And I'm sure that included Beilenson in that group. But for whatever reason I do know there was not a strong relationship between Beilenson and Burton.

PITT: Beilenson was suspected of having voted wrong on an important procedural matter.

CRANE: Well, on the election of the majority leader.

PITT: Yes. You've answered some of the questions I had. I'll skip down the page. You said that you were familiar with the Santa Monicas; you had made a trip or two. Where exactly did you go to scout out the scene before and during the time of the bill's consideration?

CRANE: Prior to the time working for the state of California. I had been down in the early stages of accepting the ornate house in the south end of Big Sur, the publishing . . .

PITT: Hearst?

CRANE: Hearst. The Hearst Castle. I had been down there. I had driven through the Santa Monica Mountains during that time. I went back on my own and drove through and looked at it and photographed areas. I didn't concentrate on any one thing at all. It was a matter of trying to get a strong feeling for [it]. Being a naturalist by background I tended to look entirely in that direction and did not look very much towards any historical significance. So I was simply looking at the natural resources, and did that area have

national significance, and if so, why? And, of course, I couldn't help but see all of the problems of how in the world to manage an area like that.

PITT: So as you put the bill together you were seeing the visual image, and on the map, the way it was divided up.

CRANE: Yes.

PITT: What were some of the answers to that? What arguments were used to favor the recreation area, despite all of that development?

CRANE: You need to talk to Susan about that. She would have much better recollections about it. I know my position on it was, and one of the things talked about a great deal, was the necessity of maintaining the area in relationship to air quality needs of the region. So when you say that you automatically think of everything. Big, big area.

PITT: Cars, roads, houses, everything.

CRANE: Then you have to start looking at that. Yes. I remember working on some of these boundaries of the area and looking at quad sheets trying to figure out where we could make boundaries so that it would make some cohesive sense for management. Of course, there was no way to do that. We relied extensively on the local people and mostly they dealt with Gail on details. They came to see us, of course, but it was a great deal with Gail, and what their desires were. And then I would try to take [what they had talked about] to the Park Service people and try to figure out how [to] make something that might work. Because it was obvious that whatever we did was going to be incredibly difficult.

In those days it even required a new way of thinking. The thinking up until then, until the Omnibus Bill, in the Park Service had pretty much been, We want a boundary around it, we want to own everything in it. In those days, the old timers, many of the Park Service people, absolutely hated Golden Gate National Recreation Area because it was those individual blocks of land. But at least they were individual blocks of land, many of which started out being owned by the federal government that could just be transferred into the park. Many hadn't been developed and were easy to acquire. This was not the case in the Santa Monicas. It was all a very difficult situation.

What I was looking for in terms of ecological integrity was trying to find a way to put together at least a central or core element from the sea to the crown of the ridge, and hopefully, down on the east side of the ridge to some degree. But, from the sea to the crown, [we would] try to find it along water courses so that we would have the entire streams within an acquired unit. All of this was very, very difficult, and I'm not sure to this day whether it's ever happened the way I had hoped it would.

PITT: I think it's still problematical. Although people do talk about that greenline. Was that part of the discussion? Was that the technical term for the boundary? The Greenline?

CRANE: I don't remember that. That must be new.

PITT: Well, it's come into discussion. Do you remember particular people in the Park Service who said, "No way", or others who said, "Okay. Let's sit down and see what we can do here"? Do you remember individuals?

CRANE: We dealt with the legislative branch of the Park Service. All of the people in it are long gone. They were reflecting the views of Park Service people and I can't tell you for sure who were those opposed and were there any who thought it was a good idea. They were reflecting an agency and departmental position, the people coming from the legislative branch. How that was derived and who the people were behind it, I can't tell you for sure. My suspicion is it was almost the entire upper echelon of the Park Service. They were very concerned and the Department of the Interior opposed, oh, a significant part of the Omnibus Bill. They opposed it for various reasons. All they wanted to do was study before anything happened. And their studies in the past had convinced them they didn't need [an omnibus bill] for the most part. They had deep, deep concerns, fairly typical of people that operate areas, that they would get anything new when they didn't feel like they had enough money for operations of what they already had. Considering today's budget, they were very fat at the time. They were deeply concerned, I know, on a philosophical base, because I've heard several other top leaders reflect this on other cases, on the idea of even adding anything that wasn't a traditional national park--Yosemite, Yellowstone kind of thing. Our position on it, and Burton strongly supported this position, was that there is no history of the United States or any of its great areas that should be excluded from being protected for the future of the people of the nation. They didn't figure that out. I think now they have, to a large degree, understood that there is no non-history.

PITT: It seems as if in the later--well, within five years after the bill--when James Watt and the Sagebrush Rebellion came on the scene, that there was an attempt to give these parks over to the states and once that conflict was resolved then the national recreation areas became stabilized in the thinking of the Park Service. Was that your impression of how things worked?

CRANE: Yes. They're still opposed, by the way. There are still the old-line people who think the Park Service should divest themselves of these.

PITT: I see. Now I sent you some pages of the *Congressional Record* to refresh your memory. I made a note to myself that on page 872 there are organizations, and people, and legislative bodies who supported the legislation. Are there any others that, if you glance at it, you can say that you forgot to say something about them?

CRANE: Wow!

PITT: Were you able to fish that out of the package?

CRANE: I remember reading that, but I didn't focus on it. What page was that?

PITT: It's on [page] 872 and it's October 12, 1978, and it's Cranston speaking. He's introduced an exhibit where you have supporters, and they're government and citizen organizations. So, for example, let's ask if you have any recollection of the Sierra Club's position and of . . . ?

CRANE: Margot Feuer represented the Sierra Club, as I recall.

PITT: I see. So there's quite an impressive list. Forty-three items there. If there are any comments, just take a moment to see if you see anything that strikes a bell and says, "Oh, I had a conversation with that person, or didn't."

CRANE: Well, first of all, these organizations and groups--the environmental groups--got them to lend their names to this. This doesn't mean that they were actively supporting. But they certainly added their names in support, which was in itself a powerful statement.

PITT: By the same token, were there grassroots opponents who lobbied and were you privy to those discussions?

CRANE: Traditionally the opposition to any legislation usually didn't talk to me. We were in the role of supporting and pushing. If we didn't support a bill it never came up. But we were seen as being supporters of the legislation or the legislation wasn't being considered. If it was being considered we were seen as supportive, which I was. So they didn't talk to me. What they traditionally did was talk to the Republican staff and the Republican members of the area that might be affected. In this case, the Republican members were strongly supportive of the legislation and had been. The bill originally was introduced by a Republican, as I recall, back in the late '60s, early '70s sometime.

PITT: [Charles] Teague.

CRANE: Oh, Teague. Right. So that was a strongly supportive area. Now if there were opposition at the time the bill was being considered coming from that area, I don't know who they were. And there was opposition. People were grumbling about it. Subsequent to the bill's enactment we had, of course, enormous opposition and had some really bad things done by the Los Angeles County supervisors.

PITT: Were you still on the scene in Congress when that was going on and do you have some stories to tell us about that?

CRANE: No. We weren't involved in that. The Park Service never came to us and said this is what's going on, can you help? Susan came to us and talked to us about it. And [it] was just incredibly difficult. There was really nothing we could do. Let me go back to some of the things I wanted in the bill. What I had originally . . .

PITT: I must interrupt. This tape is going to come to the end. I'm going to turn it over and let you get started fresh with that so would you mind pausing a moment, please.

CRANE: Certainly.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: You were about to talk about a new topic. Please.

CRANE: One of the things I knew from dealing over the years with these kinds of issues, or whether it was being put forth I'm not sure, but I was absolutely convinced that developers, once that area became ripe for development, developers would influence the political climate in such a way that they could get the authority and the power to develop anything they wanted to. We had watched that happen so many times in so many different areas in the United States that it was a foregone conclusion. So the development of an area like that, in particular, is highly dependent on federal investment, which most people don't realize. Grants for water resource or for sewage treatments, grants for water development, grants for highway construction, from the federal coffers. What I had proposed was that the secretary of the Interior would have the authority to approve or disapprove any federal grant from any federal agency in that area and thereby be able to control the subsidies that went to these developers. That was hotly debated behind the scenes, and finally the conclusion was that maybe we better not do it because it would draw not only the opposition of the developers et al, but it would also force other agencies to oppose it because they could not give up their authority to the secretary of the Interior. And as I recall I wound up having to write something in there that was pretty innocuous, like they'd notify the secretary and he'd be able to comment on any development.

PITT: So that was an idea that was left on the cutting room floor.

CRANE: Yes. And had we done that I think we could have done a lot to take the development pressure off the area because these developers live on--their manipulation of federal tax laws and benefits of programs that most people know very little about.

PITT: Not that you were the political expert at the time, but do you think that would have passed, had it remained in the bill?

CRANE: Well, knowing what I know now, no. We could have gotten it through the House I think. I don't think the Senate would have kept it in.

PITT: I think you alluded to the idea that there was a set dollar amount, and that that was debated several times. For example, Section 507-510 authorized $150 million for land purchases in the Santa Monicas, with $30 million for state and local. Did that get

debated up and down and was that a bargaining chip, the amount of money and acreage? It was for 80,000 acres and to acquire 40,000 to 50,000 acres. Do any of these figures . . . ?

CRANE: I have vague recollections of them. Let me look at the language here for a minute. But to answer your question, yes, the numbers were debated. There was involvement of the Park Service people. Mr. Burton directed their involvement in providing numbers for us, giving us estimates for average acreage cost and all that sort of thing. My recollection in the House bills, we had more money than this, and this was reduced in the Senate. And that happened in a lot of bills. I may be confusing this with something else, but that's my recollection. You know, the arguments with something like this sort of had to go along the line of, well, "What do you think? I mean, is this an absolute number?" And the answer always had to be, "No." Nobody knew. So to some degree the numbers were arbitrary. The acreage numbers we had gotten to by involvement of everybody and drawing lines, and trying to see what were the right areas to be included, and then the acres were derived from that. It wasn't that we started out with a number. And then came the issues of how much is it going to cost for how many acres? And obviously nobody knew, so there had to be an average cost worked out, and then there had to be numbers applied to that, and the minute you make it an acquisition for the Park Service, of course, all the land values double or quadruple, which nobody could take into account legitimately because historic sale values didn't reflect that.

PITT: You mentioned Gail Osherenko several times. She was also trained as a natural scientist, so you were talking the same language. Right?

CRANE: [laughter] I didn't know that. Maybe that's why we were able to talk so well together.

PITT: Well, what I can say to you now is she's a professor of Environmental Sciences at Dartmouth.

CRANE: She is? Well, that's wonderful. I'm glad to hear that. She deserves that. She's a great lady.

PITT: And so Beilenson apparently said to her, You do it, or You find out what's right and I'll do it.

CRANE: My feeling was that she had a mandate from him to do the right thing, which was not unusual. Staff often had those kind of mandates.

PITT: I've spoken with her and she's agreed to be interviewed, so I will pick up that thread when I do that. She's scheduled to be in Southern California next month. Who was the Secretary of the Interior in Carter's administration? I should know that. And did he take a personal position on all this?

CRANE: If he did I didn't know about it. I think it was the guy from Idaho, ex-governor, and then later, governor again. [Cecil] Andrus.

PITT: Andrus. Right. It wasn't as if he took the mike and told the country that he had a position.

CRANE: No.

PITT: But he did favor the opposition, would you say?

CRANE: I would put it a different way. I think he was not favorable towards the idea of this big Omnibus Bill. And he listened very strongly to the Park Service on elements reflecting the Park Service's authorizations. In principle, I suspect, he was very strongly in favor of having more areas protected, but I think it was just one of those things where they just couldn't digest all of it, as you would expect. Bureaucracies aren't designed to move quickly or endorse new ideas very well.

PITT: Now, you've stayed active and interested in all these environmental matters right down to this moment. As you look back over that time and over that bill, what's your feeling about that legislation and what you had done?

CRANE: Well, I think it was a watershed event in environmental and natural resource policy making, and I'm very, very proud of my part in that. And I guess subsequent to that time, I probably worked on, or supervised committee staff working on, somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 or 400 bills. Our subcommittee was the most active subcommittee in Congress during those years.

PITT: Three or 400 bills that . . . ?

CRANE: Were signed into law.

PITT: And some of them affecting the recreation areas that were set up? Or just additional work?

CRANE: Additional work primarily. Boundary changes and things like that. None of which were related to the Santa Monica Mountains. Many of those I'm very proud of, like the National Park in Samoa, and the Mount St. Helen's National Volcanic Recreation Area, and things like that. But I think this Omnibus Bill was the high point of the entire movement to protect public lands, or to establish national park units except, possibly, in the Alaska Lands Bill. There were many high points in the environmental area, you know, air protection and clean water, that sort of thing. But from a standpoint of public land resources, this was the ultimate single thing that was done.

PITT: Fascinating. Let me ask you, you mentioned working with National Park Service people. Was Arthur [E.] Eck on the Hill at that time?

CRANE: Arthur was, I believe, in the legislative office at that time. Certainly he was there for a period of time and I worked with him when he was in the legislative office. I think it was during this time period, but I'm not sure of that.

PITT: I'm scheduled to interview him, too. I've met him and talked to him, and we'll pick up that thread.

CRANE: He's a good man.

PITT: He really is. Are there any topics that we've left out here? Anything that you'd like to say as the last word?

CRANE: Let me take a quick look. Over the years I've made some notes to myself on my copy of the legislation.

PITT: Sure. And, incidentally, if we don't do it today, and something occurs to you later on, we can add that to this interview. No problem.

CRANE: Okay. Oh. One thing I recall now. There was a lot of debate over how much involvement the state and local governments should have in this thing. How much of the federal authority should we grant to them? How much money should we give to the state over and above the then current Land and Water Conservation Fund moneys? There were some pretty hot discussions. There was a lot of concern about whether they could withstand local politics, and do what we wanted them to do, and how did we give them inducements so that they could, and how did we control what they did so that it met the purposes that we intended? None of which I remember in any specific way, but I can remember a lot of those discussions.

PITT: What was your take do you think on the issue of how much to give to the local entities? Was it something you thought was doing . . . ?

CRANE: In those days not many of us liked the idea of turning things over to state or local government, simply because we'd seen too many problems from it. It's kind of like if you want to be absolutely sure things are going to be protected, you buy the whole thing in fee value and put a fence around it.

None of which you can do. So you start it from that philosophical base. I can remember checking very carefully on various aspects of this thing, and trying to work it so that we had some checks-and-balances to be sure the right thing would happen. And, again, I cannot remember specifics, but we were very cautious about it.

The other thing that I was very concerned about was the Advisory Commission. It is clearly unconstitutional to have an advisory commission appointed by non-federal elements of government. The Constitution is very clear if there is to be an advisory commission, i.e., advisory to the Secretary of the Interior, it's his responsibility to choose who he wants as an advisor. In this case, the language of the law allowed direct appointment by the governor and mayor, and I don't know how many other local government agencies. Clearly unconstitutional. [laughter]

CRANE: But no one's challenged it, so what? And I wanted that rewritten so they would recommend to the secretary and he would appoint, but local government did not want that done. So it was written this way. I quite frankly expected somebody to challenge that Advisory Commission in the courts at some point, but it never happened.

PITT: Interesting. Had you followed up any specific or general aspects on the Santa Monicas or of your work on the bill over the years?

CRANE: You know, I was so busy writing new bills . . .

PITT: Hundreds, apparently.

CRANE: . . . I rarely followed up on much unless somebody brought something to my attention. I can recall, yes, I can recall the Park Service bringing to my attention three things. One had to do with lands owned by the Bob Hope group that wanted to develop something. There was a road involved and fiddled with it, and did what we could do. I guess it was finally resolved to the benefit of the recreation areas.

PITT: Right. Well, it's been a great pleasure talking to you.

CRANE: Thank you for bringing back memories.

PITT: My pleasure. I congratulate you on your role in this historic piece of legislation.

CRANE: Talk to Gail because she deserves a lot of the credit for this.

PITT: I will. And if after I talk to her, and perhaps after I talk to Art Eck, something more might occur to me, I'll give you a call and maybe we'll tack it on here. This has been a very satisfying interview. I think what you did back then was terrific and I congratulate you again.

CRANE: Thank you. I appreciate it. And hope to talk to you again.

PITT: My pleasure.

CRANE: All right. Thank you.

PITT: Good-bye, Dale.

CRANE: Good-bye.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— VI —

WE'RE HERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS

An Interview with Arthur E. Eck

Arthur E. Eck was a legislative affairs specialist for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., when Congress crafted the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in 1978. He was appointed to the post of Superintendent of the NRA in 1995, and served in that capacity until 2002, when he became deputy regional director of the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service. He has now retired. He was interviewed in Thousand Oaks on July 19, 1999.

Interviewee: Arthur E. Eck
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape 1, Side A

PITT: Art, would you first please give us a brief background here: where you were born and raised, where you were educated, professional experience, and how you entered the Park Service?

ECK: Sure. I was born January 11th, 1949, in Casper, Wyoming. From there my family moved to Thermopolis, Wyoming, a small town of about 3,000 people in north-central Wyoming. That's essentially where I grew up. [I] graduated from high school there, and upon graduation proceeded to Washington, D.C. where I enrolled in the American University with the intent of getting a degree at the School of International Service there, in order to join the Foreign Service.

In my sophomore year at American University, that is, in November of 1969, I began working in the United States Senate for Sen. Gale W. McGee a Democrat from Wyoming, my home state. I continued to work in the Senate for eight years in varying capacities, both for the senator as well as for the Senate Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and eventually what became the committee, or was folded into the Committee on Governmental Affairs, or Government Operations, in the Senate. During that time working for him I handled a number of environmental issues for him.

In 1971 I graduated from American University no longer pursuing a degree in Foreign Service, but changed career goals and took a degree in American Studies, with an emphasis on Intellectual History of the United States. But I continued to work in the Senate. That was uninterrupted. [I] went from part time to full time by 1971, and handled a number of environmental issues for the senator. He was defeated in 1976. I continued to work for the Government Operations Committee under Senator Ribicoff for about six more months.

While working on environmental issues I came to know a number of people in the environmental community and, in particular, knew one Randy Jones, or Randall Durand Jones, who was a representative for the National Wildlife Federation. In 1976, or in early 1977, I suppose, he joined the National Park Service to work on Alaska lands and at that time gave me a call and suggested that I consider coming to work for the Park Service because they were staffing up their Office of Legislation in Washington, and that they were going to bring in three park rangers and they were going to bring three people off

the Hill, and throw them together into a single office and see if they couldn't revitalize their legislative program. By that means, I believe in late May of 1977, I joined the Office of Legislation of the U.S. National Park Service. I was a legislative affairs specialist there.

[I] continued to do that work up until about 1981-82, whereupon with the downsizing as well as a desire on the part of then-Secretary James G. Watt, who was also from Wyoming, to scale back any legislative initiatives for the Park Service, our office was essentially reduced--almost totally abolished. I then went to work for Ranger Activities in Washington writing regulations for the National Park Service. Did that for about a year until June of 1983 whereupon I went into the field and became an assistant superintendent at Ozark National Scenic Riverways in Missouri.

Since that time, from 1983 until 1988, I was in Missouri with a brief interlude as acting-superintendent of the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverways in Minnesota-Wisconsin. In late summer of 1988 I went to Redwood National Park as deputy superintendent, and served there until July of 1995, with a brief interlude as acting superintendent of Saguaro then National Monument, now National Park. And, as I say, in July of 1995 I came to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as superintendent.

PITT: Thank you. Good beginning. So you came up through the ranks and through various functions of the National Park Service. You were a professional. Some appointees prior to you were not necessarily out of that lineage.

ECK: Well, actually, I suspect that Dave Gackenbach came directly from Washington and was more of a professional manager. I'm not totally certain of his background, but in fact I worked with him when he was chief of concessions in the Washington office. I believe this park was his first and only field assignment. I did have field experience of about 12 years before I arrived here. On the other hand, my career is not traditional, in that many superintendents, or the classic pattern for park managers was that they began as a seasonal ranger, and then became a full-time ranger, and worked their way up through the ranks before becoming a superintendent. That's kind of the classic model. Certainly not the case for me. Frankly, not the case probably for over half the superintendents, but in myth that's kind of the pattern that exists at least.

PITT: Now in reference to this recreation area you had a very unique perspective in that you were there at the creation, as they say. You were in Washington in 1977-78 when the Omnibus Parks legislation was hammered out.

ECK: Right.

PITT: I'm wondering. Maybe tell us a little bit more what your function would be in reference to a specific piece of legislation like that or a large general piece of legislation like that. Then we'll proceed from there.

ECK: Right. I can give you a little perspective. I guess with respect to this park in particular, you could say that I was in the delivery room but I definitely was not the

attending physician. The Office of Legislation, as I said, had six people in it, working under a chief who was at that time, Mike Lambe. He was the overall chief. But the way the office was organized was that each of the legislative affairs specialists handled at least one, and maybe two, regions. Initially at that time, I only handled the Midwest Region, and then subsequently took on what was then the Rocky Mountain Region, as well. So I did not handle the Western Region, which is the region in those days that included the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. That region was handled by Robert Kasparek. Bob handled all the Western Region on legislation, which was pretty much a full time job because in addition to the Burton bill he also was dealing with the Redwood Expansion Act in 1978 which was park legislation of national consequence. I think virtually every newspaper in America had written an editorial taking sides on that issue and Bob used to handle mail by the truckload.

Late in 1977, early 1978, Phil Burton, who had taken over the Subcommittee on National Parks, made it pretty clear that he wanted to not only get redwoods done, but also wanted to get some significant park legislation passed. Mr. Burton was a hard-living populist and social activist. So when he took on that agenda it was pretty clear from the beginning that it wasn't going to be something small. So we began, I recall, going through our lists of every park that needed some sort of adjustment to its boundary or increase in its development ceiling authorization, or anything. If there was a name change that needed to be done, we drug it out. We drug everything together and threw it on the table and shipped it up to Mr. Burton, and he proceeded to assemble the bill, his strategy being that if he had something in it for everybody, everybody would vote for it. And in the end his process was proven right.

The Santa Monica Mountains NRA proposal, as such, I'm not all that familiar with--where it came from or how it arose, or how it arrived there in that bill. My impression is that from most of the bill's consideration, most of the period of time that it was being considered in the Senate and House, it did not have the Santa Monica Mountains NRA legislation in it, but [rather] that Phil picked it up and engineered it into the bill towards the end of the process, along with several others that were created at the same time. Other parks--I'm trying to remember precisely which ones did arrive at the same time, but I have a feeling that maybe the Chattahoochee River NRA was created at that same time. I could probably pick up a copy of the law and figure that out. But in any event, he clearly understood certain bills were being considered by themselves, separate and apart, others were rolled up into this Omnibus Bill. Before it was all done in November, I mean if there were any pieces of legislation sitting around that Mr. Burton thought he could get passed, he picked them up and stuck them in there and got it done.

PITT: Did you have any direct personal work with him?

ECK: Yes. With Mr. Burton I did.

PITT: And what were your impressions of him?

ECK: He was a magnificent individual. I mean, he was totally focused on what it was that he was doing. I would say that he was a brilliant man. He lived a lot on vodka and cigarettes, smoked cigarettes profusely, continuously. He was just a hard-living

individual, but he was always, always in control. He was a master of the political process, and I think actually came within one or two votes of becoming the majority leader or whip of the House. And, in fact, I remember he knew everyone who had and had not supported him in that vote because I had a piece of legislation to adjust the boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park, and that was in then-Congressman [Timothy] Tim Wirth's district. It came along kind of late in the game and I talked to Phil and said, "I'd like to get this done and I know Mr. Wirth would support it." And Phil just said to me, "No," he said, "I'm not putting that in. I'm not doing anything for Tim Worthless." I realized subsequently that apparently Wirth was one of those votes that he thought he had in the caucus and ended up not having.

PITT: In the John Jacobs biography of Burton, *A Rage for Justice*, there are some accusations rumored that Burton had against Beilenson.[5] Did you ever hear anything about that?

ECK: No, I never did. Knowing Mr. Beilenson, it's hard to imagine him feeling that way. However, it's conceivable nevertheless that Mr. Burton felt impatient. I mean, I think Tony Beilenson was more the methodical gentleman who worked with people, whereas Phil was definitely the strategist. And some people he needed, some people he didn't. The main thing was to get it done as quickly as he could. So they definitely had different styles.

PITT: Tony denies, in an interview with me, that those rumors were true, and he's confirming some of the things that you're saying about Burton's skill and focus and hard living, as you say.

ECK: Yes.

PITT: Were there other members of the Interior Committee, like Rep. [John F.] Seiberling who played a key role in the formation of the Santa Monica National Recreation Area?

ECK: You know, I really can't attest to that, except that I can only speculate. I believe that, first of all, the park faced more than one test and the first test being getting it passed. But the second test came shortly thereafter when Jim Watt became secretary of the Interior. By that point I believe Mr. Seiberling had become chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks. Mr. Seiberling represented a district in the Cleveland-Akron area and the Cuyahoga Valley [National Recreation Area] was within his district. In fact, he took an intense personal interest in that urban national recreation area. I know from talking in those days with his principal aide on the committee, Loretta Neumann, that Mr. Seiberling, I think, was very protective of the urban national recreation areas and was very concerned when the Watt administration began sort of trying to [de-authorize the area] to see if there was something in there, you know, because that clearly was their intent and agenda. I say that because by 1981--well, I should go back.

[5] *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phil Burton* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

When I described the six legislative affairs specialists, we had a chief, but the chief was down the hall and he was a lawyer and he did law. The rest of us were doing legislation and putting together proposals and maps and justifications and all of that. That's why we could be rangers and Hill people and all of that. But we had a lead, and that was Eldon Reyer. By 1981 Eldon had gone to Santa Fe as chief of planning and cultural resources and so the job of being the lead legislative affairs specialist fell to me.

PITT: I see.

ECK: So one morning in the spring of 1981 I was sitting in my office when a gentleman in a dark suit appeared in my office and said, "I'm here from the Inspector General's office and at the instruction of the secretary we are going to confiscate your files for . . ." and he began to list them: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, and I believe maybe Chattahoochee National Recreation Area. Of course, I told him, "The hell you are, because," I said, "neither I nor my staff can work without these files." And they said, well, it was important. The secretary wanted to insure that those particular files were secured and not tampered with until they could be inspected. And they kept telling me they were looking for a map, that they were looking to see if there really was a map for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, among other things.

I called upstairs and with the help of my boss we worked out an agreement. These were tall stacking four-or five-drawer file cabinets. We agreed to allow them to take those files and put them in one cabinet and then they sealed them with evidence tape. They sealed that one cabinet and I just told them, "Look, we won't go into that file. We won't take anything out of it. You seal it. When you need it you can come down and open it up and get what you need." So that's how we worked that out.

But to return to my point. I mean, when this happened it wasn't long before Mr. Seiberling and Loretta Neumann, his chief aide, were made aware of this and they were very concerned. [They] assumed, among other things, that Secretary Watt was fulfilling an earlier belief and conviction on his part that when he was head of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation--and they did a lot of studies, I believe both for Santa Monica Mountains as well as Cuyahoga Valley--that when these things were first proposed that they would send it to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation [BOR] which was his agency. I know quite specifically, particularly with Cuyahoga Valley, that his agency, their professional opinion during the Nixon administration--that's when he was head of the BOR--was that it didn't warrant, wasn't going to be part of the National Park System, that there would be more than enough ample support from the federal government to help local governments attain their goals without going the whole nine yards and making a national park out of it. Anyway, in the end it just kind of died a slow death. I mean, in spite of the fact that they sealed those cabinets and so on, I don't really recall that much ever came out of it. It wasn't long before the *New York Times* was running articles that Watt was making war on urban parks and, I mean, the whole thing kind of just became one of those media events that got out of his control, and so it seemed that after a period of time they kind of backed off and went away.

PITT: This was the so-called Sagebrush Revolution, or part of it.

ECK: Yes. Right. Mr. Watt certainly represented that. Exactly. And, moreover, he retained [Russell] Russ Dickenson who had been the director of the National Park Service towards the end of the Carter administration. [William] Bill Whalen, who had been superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and was kind of Phil Burton's candidate, became the director in 1977, just a few months after the Carter administration had taken over. Actually, I think Bill may have come in July or August of 1977.

Bill definitely represented the new National Park System with an emphasis on serving people, and all of that. I mean, he definitely would have been sympathetic to urban national parks, and so on. But by about, I believe, either 1979, 1980, anyway, for a variety of reasons Bill Whalen was replaced and Secretary [Cecil D.] Andrus decided to go with a more traditional, quote unquote, director of the National Park Service and that was Russ Dickenson. And Russ was definitely more of a traditional National Park Service person. So I believe that when Secretary Watt came on Russ Dickenson was the only agency head in the Interior Department who was retained by the Reagan administration. And I think Secretary Watt and Russ both reached an agreement, a common understanding, and I think maybe a mutual sympathy, which was that the National Park Service has grown, the system has grown about as big as it needs to grow and we don't need to keep adding a lot of parks, particularly at this point in time when we can't take care of what we've got. So that was kind of the new theme, that we're going to take care of what we've got rather than add new parks.

I suppose considering if you just looked a couple of years back and figured, well, we haven't gotten that far into some of these parks, and so on. If they had been able to they might have conceivably sought to de-authorize a couple of these parks, saying, well, they're not Park Service quality, or, you know, whatever, they're going to be too expensive, regardless of what the thing would be. I think maybe they thought there might be an opportunity, and it probably would have been consistent with the secretary's agenda and a director who certainly wouldn't have objected, but it never got that far. They never de-authorized anything.

PITT: So by the[end of the Reagan] administration that particular threat, or that philosophy, was removed. Would it return again in the system?

ECK: You mean the anti-urban era?

PITT: The anti-urban era. And if it's not a gem like Yellowstone Park we don't want it? We'll turn those parks over to the states, or what have you, and let them worry about it. We'll let the states take charge.

ECK: Right. Well, I think that view still exists to this day, and it surges back and forth. It depends. There certainly are I guess what I would call the postcard purists that don't really understand park resources. I'm sure you could even go through the National Park System and find people who don't have any use for historical or cultural areas. I mean, frankly, if it's not Yellowstone they don't see the point. But very few of those left. But still, probably, there are still a number of people who hold a bias particularly against

urban recreation areas. In their minds they can't really see that, A. the resources could be of that kind of quality that it's befitting inclusion in the national park system and, secondly, they just can't see the point of natural lands, per se, being in proximity to an urban area. I mean, to them it's an insoluble conundrum and, you know, they just think it's a losing battle.

PITT: Am I right in assuming that you disagree with that position?

ECK: Oh, yes, very much so. And for a variety of reasons. And it depends. I mean, each park is unique, each park is essentially created by Congress with a very specific vision in mind. And that's one thing that makes the Park System somewhat difficult to manage, is that each park is different from the other. That's why Yosemite has a staff of 800 and this park has a staff of 72. And I know of parks that have a staff of five. But each is equally significant. I mean, it's just like having children. There isn't one you can say, "I can spare this one," no matter what it might look like, or what it represents, or whatever.

PITT: By the way, was there a map, and did he ever find the map?

ECK: Yes, there was a map, and I don't know that they ever did. In the end I can't say whether or not they actually ended up looking. I think, among other things, what they were trying to do, though, was ascertain whether there was some kind of collusion or improper procedure, either with respect to maps, or collusion between say Mr. Burton, and whoever. But I know they were equally interested in the Cuyahoga Valley map . . .

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Art, please continue.

ECK: Okay. I think that in looking for the Cuyahoga Valley map they were hoping that they could find some collusion or involvement on the part of Mr. Seiberling that would be above and beyond what congressmen normally get into in parks. And, in fact, I know that Mr. Seiberling, as I've said earlier, was very interested in Cuyahoga Valley, and that he used to drive through the park with the superintendent. They'd see a house on a hillside, or something, and Mr. Seiberling would say, "What's that doing there? I can't have that." And if the superintendent said, "Oh, well, they just started building that," or something. He'd say, "Find out who that is. We've got to acquire that land and put an end to it." So it did get very micro-managed from time to time.

PITT: But it was not a map about Santa Monica particularly.

ECK: No, but I think the question there was whether there actually was a map. I think what their theory was that in point of fact Mr. Burton just kind of created a park without the map that was referenced in the legislation.

PITT: Now going back a little bit here to 1977. There was a time when Rep. Barry Goldwater, Jr. of the San Fernando Valley and [Rep.] Robert Lagomarsino of Ventura introduced a bill, Santa Monica Mountains Urban Park, and it was actually HR380. Do you have any recollection of them in that particular piece of legislation, or does that just merge with others?

ECK: Yes, it probably pretty much merges with others. Usually, you know, what would happen if you look in any given year, and even this year you could go in and look through all the bills, and you'd see a lot of what I would call perfunctory introductions. Members introduce bills because they kind of have a commitment to their constituents. That's not to say they aren't interested. It's kind of throwing it in the hopper, and that way you get credit for having done something. It starts moving, that's even better. But usually, like Mr. Goldwater and Lagomarsino would probably be somewhat at the mercy of the chairman. Creating a new park is always a fair amount of challenge, more so than most. So the opportunity of an Omnibus Bill was probably very fortunate for them.

PITT: And also in that year--I'm not sure whether this came before or after the one I just mentioned--Anthony Beilenson introduced Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Islands National Park and Seashore Act and hearings were held, but the bill died. Do you have any recollection of that moment, or is that another one that blended?

ECK: No. Again, I don't. I have a feeling that maybe Mr. Beilenson's bill was more the inheritance from Alphonzo Bell's legislation.

PITT: I think that makes sense.

ECK: Yes, and that probably is the result of [the work of] John Gingles. John Gingles, with whom I also worked in the Office of Legislation, originally worked for Alphonzo Bell in the House of Representatives and then subsequently, I think, worked for Mr. Beilenson for a period of time before joining the National Park Service.

PITT: Now, that was a time of grassroots activism and people lobbying for, and sometimes against, the parks, and particularly in Santa Monica. Did you have any direct contact or observation with people from the Santa Monica area at that time?

ECK: No, I didn't. I can attest to the fact that it was a time of intense social activism. I mean, virtually any park that was relatively new had its friends organization, or its alliance, and they tended to be grassroots activists. It definitely was very much the case at that time, and probably still continues to be. But I haven't really worked on any new park proposals lately, but they really did tend to be a product of citizen involvement.

PITT: In the Jacobs book on Burton he implies that Jimmy Carter was cool to the Santa Monica proposal, and had to be pushed somewhat on it, and that Burton offered up some kind of deal where he would support a park in Georgia to get Carter and the Carter administration going. Had you ever heard of anything like that?

ECK: No, but if that's the case, he is probably referring to the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, which I have here looking at the official index of the National Park Service. It was established on the 15th of August, 1978, and I do recall that it was a smaller bill that had five or six park proposals in it, and I guess what that says is that Mr. Carter's deal also included that Mr. Burton had to go first and deliver on his side before he would accept [the] Santa Monicas because that was obviously in November of 1978. However, that's the only piece of legislation that occurred in Georgia at that time, so assuming that's true, and I can't verify it, that would have to be the park that he's referring to.

PITT: Perhaps you could clarify this confusion in my head. The Channel Islands park was a concept that was attached to the Santa Monica one at the beginning with many of the congressmen that we've just mentioned [and] maybe others. [It] then got detached and was actually declared a year later than the Santa Monica one was declared by the president. Was this all part of the Omnibus Bill, or was there a separate, maybe a part two of the Omnibus Bill, that came later?

ECK: Well, that's an excellent question, and I cannot totally answer that, although I can tell you who could tell you. That would be [William] Bill Ehorn the superintendent at Channel Islands at the time. I worked for Bill at Redwood National Park. Bill would know. There's no question in my mind Bill was a visionary dreamer and an activist. His whole thing was let's do something. That was his philosophy. And I know that he was committed to making Channel Islands a national park, one way or another. So you're right. Channel Islands was not established separately as a park until 1980, March 5th, 1980. I recall going to a hearing and even Terry Wood who by that time was handling the Western Region. I remember Terry saying that anytime people mentioned Channel Islands that Bill wanted to stand up and salute in the hearing room because he was just so gung ho and enthused about it. I don't know exactly. But after the interview I'll give you a phone number. He could answer that question for you probably very simply. I know he was very close to Mr. Lagomarsino, though, so at some point it may have been that the two of them decided that that wasn't worth pursuing any further.

PITT: Before arriving here, you said you were deputy superintendent at Redwood National Park, and you were appointed to come to this one. How did the appointment come about? Can you say specifically?

ECK: Well, yes. It was a competitive process in that there was a job announcement after Mr. Gackenbach announced he was retiring. I mean, they issued a vacancy announcement, the Park Service did, and I'm sure there were applicants. I don't know how many applicants there might have been, or whatever. I only know of one other person who applied, but I'm sure there were others.

The way I came to be interested in the job--and I did advise my regional director in San Francisco at the time, [Stanley] Stan Albright, of my interest in the job. The reason was that I had in the fall of 1994 been asked to consider the superintendency at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. I thought about it and indicated to John Reynolds, who at that time was the deputy director of the National Park Service, that I wasn't particularly interested in that assignment because, among other things, I felt that it was essentially an old-line park and most of the things that needed to be done there were already done. I didn't consider it much of a challenge. But John indicated to me, " You need to think about your career. You either need to make a move now or you're going to spend the rest of your career at Redwood." So when Dave Gackenbach announced his retirement, or that he was leaving Santa Monica Mountains, I did talk to Stan Albright, the regional director, the one who would ultimately make the selection. I indicated to him that I thought I might be interested in this assignment, primarily because I knew there was a lot of relationship with the state which was something I had worked on at Redwood National Park and as well as the fact that it was just a large challenge and a lot of opportunity to do things. I just made it clear to Stan that I didn't want a job that I was concerned would be boring. So he expressed some surprise that I would be interested, but said he'd be willing to consider it. I don't know. So when the announcement came out I applied for the job and subsequently was notified that I'd been selected.

PITT: I think before I ask you another question about the 1990s, I should ask you whether there's anything else you recall of the 1977-78 period about the people, or the legislation, or the objectives, or the strategies, or anything that might have come to mind about the old days.

ECK: No, except that I guess I'd like to add parenthetically that [Robert] Bob Kasparek, who handled the legislation--and to be quite honest, you know I can't tell you how active he was in it, but he was my counterpart. I know what I did for the Midwest and the Inner Mountain Region and I would assume that he was doing the same in the Western Region that he handled. But I just want to add parenthetically that he's an interesting fellow, and that he died about, probably about eight or nine years later. He was killed in a plane crash outside of Durango, Colorado. It was in December or late November, as I recall. He was headed for Durango to attend a public meeting on something to do with Mesa Verde and it was a small commercial aircraft that crashed on a mountain. Actually Bob survived the crash but essentially gave his own life trying to make sure that [others were safe]. A couple of people went to get help, some people were injured and were left in the fuselage with the plane, or whatever, and Bob stayed behind and did what he could to, as I understand it, get people out of the wreckage and keep them warm and so on. In the course of doing all of that, I guess, he perished as a result of hypothermia. But I always thought that was interesting, and his name is one of those few names listed in our principal hallway in Washington as a Park Service employee who died a hero's death.

PITT: Deservedly so.

ECK: Yes.

PITT: That is an interesting story. Coming back then to, say, 1995. That was the year when you came here.

ECK: Right.

PITT: What condition did you find the park in when you got here? What was the legacy or what was the challenge that you were facing with Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area when you first got here?

ECK: Well, it was a disturbing time, in that the new Congress had--the House of Representatives had changed hands, had gone from Democrat to Republican in November of '94. Actually, in January of '95. And the Republican leadership, particularly in the person of Congressman Hansen, I think James, Jim Hansen of Utah, had kind of revisited the Watt issue of the Secretary Watt point: Don't we have too many parks and really are all these parks worthy of being in the system, and isn't it time that maybe we think about having a commission to review, and perhaps access, some of those who really aren't worthy of the system? And by name Mr. Hansen mentioned Santa Monica Mountains [National] Recreation Area as being, you know, essentially--his impression was that it was just a city park for Los Angeles. So that definitely was a concern to me that the park was under threat. I mean that was a concern that I came with down here. Then when I got down here I did realize that, in point of fact, land acquisition was kind of the game, as it were. That the park's other purposes weren't all that clearly focused. By that I mean to say, emphasis on protecting resources and delivering quality programs and communicating the message of the National Park Service, were not all that well defined.

To make matters worse, even though land acquisition was the principal aim, the money had dried up. What money was left seemed to be in the hands of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and it was the focus of a storm of controversy about Soka University and how it was using what little money it did have left, and so on. So it was a very disturbing time. In my view the park was indeed at considerable risk of coming undone if we didn't do something. And primarily upon arriving I felt the park needed to get, (a) more back to basics, and (b) needed to clearly define its own agenda rather than be at the mercy of everybody else's agenda.

PITT: Was this the first time you had been in Southern California?

ECK: Well, not the very first time, but close to it in that . . .

PITT: What were your impressions, first of all, of the physical surroundings and of the park as a feature of nature in the midst of this urban environment?

ECK: I was impressed in that there definitely was a lot more to the natural resource than might have been assumed originally. I mean, you look at a postcard of downtown L.A. that doesn't tell you anything about the park. And over the next several years, as I came to think about the park and appreciate and understand the park better, I came to realize that indeed it had a very, very significant natural resource. That, in point of fact, the

protection of the natural resources here, as well as the cultural resource--although we don't understand those as well as we should and we're working to correct that--but at least the natural resources here are probably without parallel in the National Park System. And that to the extent that the National Park System represents an effort on behalf of the American people to preserve the best of all the facets of the United States and its natural and cultural element, that this park holds its own as being as significant--equally significant--as any other park, including Yosemite. That's not to say, perhaps, and to some extent this is a function of taste, but it's not to say that, "Okay, this park has something that looks like, you know, Yosemite Valley, or has something that looks like Grand Canyon." No. It doesn't. But that's for postcards. That has nothing to do with park resources.

When you look at resources as representing unique biological or cultural fabrics that authentically carry forth from the past something that's to be preserved for all time, that's a very rare, precious piece of our heritage. In that fashion this park is equal to any of them because the Mediterranean ecosystem which I've come to appreciate and understand is kind of the base line environment upon which world civilization rests. I mean, humankind in our civilization, the ability to civilize ourselves, really arose in a Mediterranean ecosystem, even though it was on another continent. But I consider the Mediterranean ecosystem to be the base line human environment, and it's one of the smallest on the face of the earth, and these mountains here essentially represent a real small part of this very small environment, particularly that which is left on the North American mainland.

Now the Channel Islands are also a Mediterranean ecosystem, but as a base line and as part of a broader heritage of, you know, the patterns of human settlement, and so on, they don't tell us all that much about California because as island environments they have a unique biology that kind of developed on its own path that's separate and apart. Those islands are significant for their rare and endangered species, as well as models of island ecosystems. But these mountains here represent the mainland representation of the Mediterranean ecosystem as it's found on the North American continent. It's a very small part. I mean, for every acre of Mediterranean ecosystem that you have here, you have probably 10 million acres, you know, of the Arctic tundra. It's not my purpose to compare one another in terms of importance, but in terms of scarcity there's no arguing the question that this is probably--this is much rarer than Yosemite Valley and the biota that's associated with the Yosemite Valley. I mean, you can find it 100 miles north and 100 miles south of the Yosemite Valley. It covers acres and acres and acres. But what you find here is very, very rare.

PITT: That's a fascinating perspective. So that came to you as a realization, more or less, in a short time.

ECK: Yes. Well, certainly as we began to devote greater interest in this, greater emphasis in this park on science and resource management. I mean, when I came here we had, well, we had about four people working in the area of science and resource management. Today we've got almost, well, we've got probably six. Hopefully, with the passage of the next appropriations bill we'll double that to twelve. But in addition to those six, unlike when I came here, there were a few researchers doing collaborative

research, but now whereas there might have been--my impression is there may have been a couple dozen. But now, now we have over 100 people doing collaborative research and researchers, and so on. A lot of this, I mean, it's not me that's going out there and doing it. It's the product of a very committed staff. But I hope they would agree that I've worked to make science a priority in this park.

My theory is, my philosophy is, that without the resource there really is no park. I mean, there's no reason to invite the public here to see something that otherwise could just be a coffee table book. I mean, let's take pictures of it, put it in a book, and say that's your experience, and we'll just pave over the rest of what we have here. But if it's to represent an authentic outdoor experience there has to be authentic resource there and that comes from science, and from trained cultural researchers, historians, and so on. That's what we have to assemble and that's what we have to start with. That's the starting point in my book, and that's what we try to base our decisions on because that will always insure the public that the resource they come to see then is still there.

PITT: And do you still think of it as being near the beginning of this process or have you advanced in this process far along?

ECK: That's an interesting question. I still think of this as a relatively new park with a lot of things left to be done. I still find it as challenging as when I got here. But then that's the nature of this park. I mean, if it was a historic site of maybe 20 acres or something, and once it got its visitor center and its exhibits up you could figure it was done. But this park is not like that.

PITT: Not like that.

ECK: It will be a long time coming and fitting all the pieces together.

PITT: When I interviewed Robert Chandler he said that one of the things that struck him as the first superintendent was that it was an excellent instance, a pioneering instance, of a partnership of different government levels--federal, state, county, municipal, and that this partnership to him was a very special thing and became a model for other national parks. Did this continue in your contact also?

ECK: Yes. And we're still trying to define what the ideal relationship is because a relationship is dynamic. In fact, I don't know that a relationship is ever, ever becomes cemented per se. But we continue to do that, and I agree. I mean, in addition to preserving the resources here, I believe, and I think my staff is one with me in this, that our second great task here is to define a new model of parks for the twenty-first century. The public domain has pretty much been totally allocated throughout the United States. And so to the extent that there are parks in the next century, and centuries to come, they will follow our model rather than Yellowstone's model. I continue to believe that new parks will be created but the basic premise upon which they will be created and established and operated, will be based on lessons learned here, not at Yellowstone. And so we kind of view ourselves as much as anything, as a research facility. That is to say, that we're trying to learn, document, and teach others the experience of cooperation as

well as simply park management at the urban interface. More and more no park stands alone, isolate and remote. The old view that a park was . . .

End of Tape 1, Side B

Beginning of Tape 2, Side A

PITT: Art, you were talking about no park is an island, [is] the theme you were developing, or perhaps already developed. Perhaps you could finish up on that or tell me more about that and then we'll proceed.

ECK: Okay. Let me just reiterate. In my view parks are not isolated from their surroundings.

PITT: Please proceed.

ECK: Okay. And I believe that probably leads to another element of significance about the Santa Monica Mountains that I've been doing research on over the past six months. And that is the concern that I have about the National Park Service collectively, that is, all the parks within the system and the role that this park has to play in preserving that system. And when I say parks aren't isolated, I do mean biologically, but I also mean sociologically, as well, that parks are not isolate. And they are ultimately the product of law and the will of man. They are not ends in and of themselves, and they are not inviolate institutions. They can be altered, they can be disposed of. There are parks that no longer exist, that have been units of the National Park System in the past, and, for whatever reason, were de-authorized. So it's not a concept without precedent.

My concern is that, increasingly, parks serve a traditional white America if you look at visitation to national parks. They represent the middle-class white America as their principal constituency. I mean, parks are very much loved. But the concern that I have is that if there's a significant element of the population that you don't serve, then as you evolve a new constituency in a democratic society like ours, what happens if that constituency finds parks to be irrelevant to their needs and to their experiences?

I've been doing some research into demographics and so on. I mean, earlier this year probably California crossed the threshold where it no longer is a majority state in terms of any particular ethnic group--that it no longer is over 51 percent majority populated by white Americans. It's the first state to reach that, but by the middle of the next century actually our nation will be on the verge of changing its demographics in that same way. A lot of these people, in my view, are underserved by the National Park System. We have few opportunities to establish and build a new constituency for that twenty-first century but one of them exists here in Los Angeles. And I say that because if you want to build a new constituency I think you're going to look at young people particularly.

The demographic research I've done indicates that by the middle of the next century conceivably one in every six minority youth in America could be a resident of the greater Los Angeles area. And so in addition to paying greater attention to science and hard research, from the standpoint of natural and cultural resources, my second goal and impetus here, and one that I assume on the basis of the National Park System itself, is to try by sometime early in the next century, to insure that every child in the greater Los Angeles area, receives at least one education experience in this park, in order to insure that they know how to find their way home to what I'm going to call the real America. I mean to me, what national parks represent in an age of media video games and other experiences you can have that are fabricated and simulated, but national parks, I hope, will always represent America for real, for the people, and for all time. It's that "for real" that I want to emphasize, and I feel it's imperative that the National Park Service now realize that Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, rather than being a millstone or some unwanted oversized object that they're having to carry around, is in point of fact, the savior of the National Park System. That it is, along with other recreation areas, those portals by which we'll begin to build a new constituency for the next century and insure that parks are always respected and loved, and that people always have a place and a desire to insure that our nation's heritage is preserved.

PITT: That's wonderful.

[laughter]

ECK: Oh, yes, that must be a speech. I'm sorry. I don't mean to grab the mike here and just [go on]. My staff always says that you have to worry that when I start talking it'll end up being a sermon, but . . .

PITT: No. I'm glad you did. I remember a couple of years ago, one of the things you were talking about as a challenge for you is that the land ownership pattern was so confusing and so complex and so covered over by layers of legalism, that you were going to try and sort it out.

ECK: Yes.

PITT: Have you proceeded to do that as well?

ECK: Yes. We have made pretty good progress in that regard. One of the concerns that the committees in Congress had was they didn't know where they felt money that they appropriated for land acquisition was going. They would pull up a map of the park and they would see the land that was in federal ownership versus that that wasn't, and they kind of wonder when is this all going to end. The comment that was made a couple of years ago during a House report--this is hearsay--but that one of the members said, referred to the map, the patchwork, as it were, of federal parklands as being a mess.

PITT: A mess?

ECK: A mess, I think. And although I think there is good reason probably for everything that the Park Service has acquired, there's no question that in an age of fewer and fewer dollars, and a desire for more accountability, and so on, that--as well as things that I had witnessed. Which is to say that, particularly with the Conservancy which is a state agency, one of our principle partners, and one of its principle functions is to acquire and preserve parklands as well, that the Conservancy had fallen victim in many instances to the dynamics of the political environment that it operated in. And frequently that wasn't necessarily politics for the common good but one neighborhood versus another neighborhood trying to insure that its backyard and scenic setting was preserved before somebody else's got preserved. And the question is, how do you make choices like that? So here we were confronted with a patchwork and a very fluid, dynamic, contentious system within our constituency that, in effect, was depriving us of a unified voice of support.

I mean, the other thing that the folks on the Hill were saying was that, yes, they got a lot of context, a lot of people came up to Capitol Hill asking for money on behalf of the Santa Monica Mountains, but everybody was working a different agenda, and so they felt like they were never going to be satisfying anybody. They were just going to begin to satisfy one group at the expense of another. They really wanted to see some leadership and some accountability.

What we did shortly after I arrived here, we supported a young woman who was doing research on land protection. And what she did was, she surveyed and interviewed and worked with land managers throughout Southern California. They were of a variety of land preserve arrangements. They might have been wildlife refuge managers, or park managers, or whatever. But she essentially asked them a very basic but useful question, which is, How do you decide which piece of land you preserve first? Faced with parcel A on the east, and parcel B on the west, how do you make a decision? They fed all this information back to her, and what we learned from that, essentially something that I think we kind of instinctively knew but it was nice to have a systematic answer, and that was, that the first thing that's important, particularly for natural resources, is to preserve what's known as a core habitat, or a core environment--a piece of land that's sufficiently continuous that wildlife can feed, feast, reproduce, populate, and live a life, as it were. And in sufficient numbers so that there's a genetic pool there that insures the health and vitality of that body.

So that was the first and key thing. If you had a piece of land you would probably want to buy a--if you were going to buy a new piece of land it would be adjacent to the largest core habitat that you have. The second thing that would be of value would be to preserve routes of connection between two or more core habitats. In other words, connect them so that wildlife resources could distribute and disseminate from one core habitat to another. The third was there are environments that are particularly unique or rich in their diversity, such as riparian environments. Some are unusual and scarce. We have some in the park like upland rock outcroppings which are very important as nesting sites to hawks and eagles, and so on. So those represent very specific but rare and productive environments. The fourth is that there are certain environments that are peculiar habitats to very specific endangered species, and if you're trying to preserve those species you need to acquire more lands, and so on.

What we did was, we took those in the order that the land managers use, and realized that they're fairly consistent with our mission which is essentially to protect the resources, as well. What it didn't have was a provision for cultural resources and it didn't have a provision for recreational resources. The cultural resources we decided to work through using criteria the same as is used in the National Register, in terms of identifying first of all, were they on the Register? And the Register itself has criteria in terms of what are rare and unrepresented themes in American history, and so on.

We also made provision for the fact that certain features in the mountains have cultural significance, say to Native Americans. I mean, there's no way to put a value on that, but they just are. If a mountain represents a spirit, a place of spirit to Native Americans it has its own innate significance. Finally, we looked at recreational resources and some issues along those lines. Primarily what we did is, if we have an existing plan, and the Backbone Trail is a good example. In order to attain this facility you are looking at lands that aren't necessarily protected right now because there is just a proposed alignment. So we used that as a criteria, as well. Those are three basic blocks. But, within them--that is, cultural, natural, and recreation resources. But within them, just as I kind of enumerated with the natural resources, you have these intermediate or internal priorities.

And I might say, in the recreational, another thing we tried to attain, and we're still in the process because it's an open-ended process of gathering data. I mean, tomorrow we'll always know a bit more and make a better decision than today, but using computerized mapping system we take all of this data and let the computer sort millions of pieces of information in order to identify parcels of land that are of the highest values and get away from "my backyard, or local politics, or politics of convenience and expediency," and give the people in Congress more confidence in what we're doing with their money. My statement to them was, "If you give me one dollar, the one thing I can assure you is that that dollar will be spent in the most effective way it can to attain the purpose and the mission of the park as you set out when you created it in 1978." Because of any two parcels of land, one parcel will do a better job of attaining that mission of natural, and cultural, and recreational resource preservation than another parcel. There's so much information, that only with the assistance of a computer, and this information gathering process can we hope to approach that. And clearly we'll make some mistakes. I mean, I always say that tomorrow we'll make a better decision, and more informed decision, than we can make today. But we have to begin now. The sooner we start the better off we are. So that's the process we've been operating under now for about a year.

The plan, the system itself, came up and has been up and running since last spring and it's served us pretty well. It's not been put to a full test, in that so far the committee [in] Congress has said they'd really like to get the Backbone Trail done because they've been hearing about the Backbone Trail for years and years and years and they just want to get it over with. By the same token whereas my first year we received no money at all for land acquisition, now for the last couple of years we've been receiving a couple million. Even though this year it looks we're only going to receive two million, at least this is the first year that the Clinton administration has requested money on behalf of the Santa Monicas of any significant amount. They asked for five million, and I think as things proceed that we'll begin to see more and more funds.

PITT: Beginning to see a payoff for establishing the goals and establishing the management system, and so on.

ECK: Yes. I've always believed that in the end, professional park management builds its own constituency and attracts its own resources. I mean, that if you do it right you get beyond issues of personality and opportunity, and so on.

PITT: Now there's always been an intense and high level of participation among grassroots people and organizations--Sierra Club, Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation, homeowner associations. What's your take on this participation since you've gotten here?

ECK: My sense is it's very sincere, it's very committed, [but] it's not unified. There are a great number of perspectives on the Santa Monica Mountains and what it represents or what it ought to be doing next, and where it ought to be investing its energy and its resources. There's very little--I mean, there's not a lot of agreement--but there's a lot of energy there. I understand the dynamics of why there's not a lot of agreement. A lot of the energy comes from the disagreements themselves, you know, and I appreciate the fact that people in Mandeville Canyon or Encino are working their own agenda. To the extent that they do, they're going to work harder and that's okay. My goal is to establish respect for the leadership of the National Park Service. I want them to work their own agenda, but nevertheless be willing, at least for a moment, to be still and listen to what we have to say, and, hopefully, work with us cooperatively. And so far, by and large, I think that's been happening.

PITT: I see. Now, Tony Beilenson when he was talking about his perspective, one of the things that he said that struck me, was that if the county of Los Angeles, in particular, had done its job historically of protecting the environment, there might not have been a need for a Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. And we have seen and read in the press of the pressure to develop land and build mansions, and so on and so forth. What is your take on the pressure to build, and on the actual building, and on the county's role these days?

ECK: Well, you know, I'm not an overly informed observer on the dynamics of Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County in particular and how it evolved and grew. I know little bits and pieces from reading, and so on. I have the sense that he is right in that there have been a number of missed opportunities that the county could have acted at other times, earlier times, just more vigorously [and] enforced its own rules and regulations in a systematic way. Though sometimes it appears that one county agency was in the process of doing that only to be undermined by another agency. I mean, we still find that. You can find that in the federal government, as well. They're not necessarily all synchronized. And so had those things come to pass, it's true I think, that conceivably the resources in these mountains could be a lot better preserved, and a lot of unfortunate developments, maybe that should never have been undertaken, could have been avoided.

Having said that, if you understand what I say though about the significance of the resource, as well as just the significance of the proximity of this park to 15 1/2 million

people, I would still argue--and Tony and I could have a friendly discussion about this, I know, in fact he'd probably be flattered to hear this--but I would still argue at this point from my perspective that these mountains needed to be a national park [and] that their significance and their purpose extends beyond just the recreational relief of the people of Los Angeles. They represent part of a heritage. Sometimes I still readily view myself as an outsider, as a person, as a little boy who grew up in a state that really you could take 2,000 oaks and make a population that's the equivalent of my home state of Wyoming. I still view the world as a Wyomingite, as a person who comes from a very unpopulated land. But I look at these mountains and say, "This is part of my heritage and I very much have an interest and a concern in what happens here." And I say that as an American. So to me, I mean, the park should have been created.

The more interesting question, in my view, is whether or not at some point in the future it should continue to be considered a national recreation area, or whether it should have a different and more formal designation, and conceivably even refer to it as a national park. And it is a national park in the meaning of the law that Congress has defined. We in the Park Service refer to all units of the National Park System as national parks. But 50 of those some 400 units are formally referred to by name as a national park.

The thing that makes Santa Monica Mountains different than most other urban recreation areas, or urban national parks, is that it is one contiguous land mass, which is significant from a biological resource standpoint. If you look at Golden Gate National Recreation Area it is not a contiguous piece of land. It's Golden Gate National Park, it's Crissy Field, it's Alcatraz Island, it's the Marin Headlands, it's this beach here and that beach there, and so on. But it's a collection or an amalgam of parklands within a city. But this park is like the traditional park mode, and from a biological standpoint, if that was your goal, to preserve natural resources, you would want a contiguous park area established, which this area does indeed do.

PITT: Back in the time when the park, the recreation area, was formed and people wondered how much it would cost, how much money it would take to buy all the land that would be needed to flesh it out and fill it out, the figure I saw was $120 million. Is there such a single figure now, and how far off are we from the $120 million mark?

ECK: Well, I think to date probably, first of all, that that number has been exceeded by the federal acquisition, I mean it's more like $158 million.

PITT: Already?

ECK: Right. That has been expended.

PITT: I see. Okay.

ECK: But there still may be truth in that figure that was cited at that time. If the $120 million had all arrived in 1978 it's conceivable that maybe they could have acquired the lands that they needed. Now it's important to understand that the recreation area is about 150,000 acres, and that when all the land intended for park protection has been protected, there will still be 50,000 acres of privately owned property within the recreation area

boundary, which essentially on that map you can see as being gray and light purple and so on. So the goal is essentially 100,000 acres in parkland. Today, some 70,000 acres is preserved, so there's about 30,000 acres that's left to be acquired. My guess is that probably the cost of those 30,000 acres [is] somewhere in the vicinity of about $300 million that still needs to be expended in these mountains.

Now I would also say that's not too overly expensive in that if you consider Redwood National Park, where I last worked, in 1978 we added 48,000 acres and the cost of that 48,000 acres was approximately $1.4 billion. And that's a park that has a little less visitation than we count in this park on an annual basis. The federal count, that is, just people who cross our counters, or whatever, is somewhere approaching 600,000, although the actual visitation of this recreation area is more in the neighborhood of 30 million. But nevertheless, I mean, there, at Redwood, you have a park that essentially only serves the people who go to visit it because not that many people live around it. It's very remote, it's very distant. I don't regret the preservation of the redwoods for a minute. It was worth every penny of the $1.4 billion, but when you look at it in comparison then, when all is said and done, maybe we'll have spent half as much . . .

End of Tape 2, Side A

Beginning of Tape 2, Side B

PITT: Please continue, Art.

ECK: Okay. That when all is said and done, you will have spent half as much as was spent for Redwood National Park, and serve a park, and preserve a park that serves anywhere from 100 to 1,000 times as many people on a daily basis. To me, that's a pretty good return on an investment. Because I think actually about one in every--oh, what are we looking at? We're looking about 1 in every 14 Americans lives in the greater Los Angeles area. And, of course, the park's value is not only from the standpoint of recreation, but also clean water and clean air and beaches that you can swim in and vistas that you can see and air that you can breathe. So its benefits are certainly more than just a direct recreational experience.

PITT: Right. Now from the beginning, or maybe even before the beginning, what is now known as the Soka property, appeared to be the first choice for a park headquarters. That goal has eluded those who wanted that to be the case. Do you think we'll ever see that happen yet?

ECK: Yes, I think so. I have no idea what the university's plans are, and as a neighbor our obligation is to work with them, and they own the property and they have a right to enjoy their property. Having said that, it's my intention, my purpose, to also say that the park is here, we're here for a thousand years, and a lot longer beyond that, and that a time will come when that property, I think, will become available to us, and that we should

never lose sight of that goal. We should never stop thinking of that goal. We should always keep that as the goal. The people who said that had a reason for including that in their plans and in their aspirations for this park. And whereas I think this park can easily exist without Soka University, or it can exist--I mean, it doesn't cease existing just because Soka University, or as I prefer to call it, the Gillette Ranch--it is not a prerequisite for the existence of the park.

By the same token, its presence within the park will significantly enhance and improve the protection of park resources. It is located at the most key strategic location within the recreation area. It is the very center of the heart of the recreation area. It's certainly the keystone between the state and the national parks in terms of trying to tie the two together into a cohesive unit. And it's a very significant cultural resource. So from those standpoints, I am not prepared now, never will, and I would admonish any successor who would think otherwise, than to say that we should always keep our eye on the prize, and that the prize is the Gillette Ranch. I just tend to be more patient and have more faith. I mean, all things will come in their time that should come, and Gillette Ranch is definitely one thing that must come.

PITT: How do you see the relationship with the Conservancy now? I've attended a few meetings and I always see you in attendance. What's your take on the Conservancy and its role, and its relationship to the national park?

ECK: Our relations are good. I mean, I do view the Conservancy as a cooperator. Their role is very much different than ours, and I know a lot of people question whether they're performing the right role, or, you know, there's a lot of controversy about the fact that they work outside of the Santa Monica Mountains now, and so on. They've been accused of trying to build an empire and such things. I don't really--to me, I'm for the preservation of any kind of land, you know, anytime, anywhere, if it's for the good of the people and for the good of the city, and things like working on the Los Angeles River, and so on. I mean, in and of themselves, I think that's a laudable goal and I don't worry too much about it.

My main purpose has been to not lose, not waste valuable energy and time by fighting with the Conservancy, but trying to be more clear, professional, and in the lead, and show them the way. Because I think in many instances, perhaps from time to time, they lost the way and pursued an agenda that wasn't necessarily consistent with this park. But to the extent that that happened I think I, and/or my predecessors are probably the ones to blame. I mean, if we're doing their job then they clearly know where we're coming from, and if we're doing our job well, they'll follow our lead. But I don't try to worry about their activities outside the extent of the recreation area. And I know some people have even gone so far as to call for the elimination of the Conservancy. I honestly think that would be a mistake. Now that we are beginning to get into more land acquisition activity, and so on, though I plan to keep a tight rein on them, it's my intention to make more use of them because sometimes it takes our offices up to a year in order to nail down the acquisition of a piece of land. If I can, and the Conservancy can do it in six hours, as they say they can--I'm a little skeptical on that--but if they can then that's fine. I mean, they should be a tool and an instrument of policy, but also, hopefully, pursuing a professional course as opposed to a political course.

PITT: Quite literally the Conservancy was supposed to have, and is supposed to have, a "sunset" aspect--to come to an end.

ECK: Right.

PITT: But the Park Service is here forever, as you say.

ECK: That's true. Yes. That is right.

PITT: Just to go back a moment. Do you remember the first, or among the first times you met Tony Beilenson, and maybe talked about Santa Monica.

ECK: Yes, actually I do. I was very impressed because I've worked around people on the Hill for a long time, or had for many years, so dealing with a congressman is not a new experience for me. However, dealing with Tony Beilenson was a new experience. First of all, I wasn't given a summons to go to his office. He very politely asked if he and his staff could come over to my office, and they called upon me. And I found him to be one of the most courteous and thoughtful people I ever encountered. From the very get go I was extremely impressed. And he from that moment forward commandeered an eternal admiration that I'll never give up. He is one of the most impressive people that I've ever known in political life. I'm very sorry, and I think he is sorry as well, that we didn't have an opportunity to work together for a longer period of time. Now I understand his reasons for leaving office, and in fact he called me the day that he made his announcement--he called me a couple of hours before he made it--asked me not to say anything to anyone, but that he was going to leave public office. And he told me, as well, that he regretted the fact that if he had one regret it was that he wouldn't be there to stand for the Santa Monica Mountains. That, all in all, taking everything together, he felt that it was the right decision. And I respect that.

PITT: He made his contribution, and this building we're in today is the Anthony Beilenson Center.

ECK: Right. The Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center. Designated by Congress.

PITT: You did say you had an American Studies background and I hear someone who is thoughtful, and a reader, and a scholar. Do you have a favorite book on environmental history or environmental matters? Something you would recommend to any serious student of the Santa Monicas?

ECK: Good question. Well, actually my own personal Bible is John Ise's, *National Park Policy*.[6] If I retire maybe I'll take on the assignment of updating John Ise's book, but his book is probably the finest exploration of the evolution of the Park Service as well as its policies simultaneously. The regrettable thing about the book is that I think Mr. Ise

[6] *Our National Park Parks Policy: A Critical History* (1st edn, 1961; 2nd edn, New York: Arno Press, 1979).

finished it in the late ‘50s and so it never has carried on beyond that, so as a survey it’s a little deficient in that it doesn’t account for the last 30 years. However, to me, and I know to a number of superintendents, we treasure the copies of that book that we have because I don’t think it’s printed anymore.

PITT: I’m sure you’ve thought about this yourself, and you’ve been asked it. It might be a good way to conclude. We’re on the eve of a new millennium. What do you see in the new millennium for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area?

ECK: Well, as I indicated before, I think that what you’ll see is a much greater emphasis on education, that we’ll be delivering programs not just here in the mountains but into the cities as well, that we’ll be trying to make that reach. I anticipate a continued emphasis on resource management and a greater appreciation and awareness of the local population of the resources that are here. That’s beginning to happen with the biological resources. [I] hope to see that happen as well with cultural resources.

In the next 10 years I hope that we can undertake a rather methodical survey of our cultural resources because I think particularly with regard to twentieth century fine arts and so on, that there’s a significant element of resources that are here or immediate to our boundaries that are not appreciated. We only need a little piece of fabric in order to tell a whole story. But a lot of those little pieces of fabric are probably here as opposed to anywhere else in the national park system. And I’m thinking of people like F. Scott Fitzgerald, and so on. I mean, there is no National Park site, and I don’t think there ever can be a National Park site, that interprets and weaves that strand of our story of early twentieth century, or twentieth century American literature. But if there’s a park to do it, this is the one. But we need a methodical survey. There are so many cultural resources in these mountains. Just as with land acquisition, I mean, we could easily exhaust ourselves trying to attend to everything. Unfortunately, sometimes in cultural resources, particularly the tangible, the fabric--I mean, if they’ve got it they want to commit themselves totally to it, whereas my concern is that we have to have a sense of priority. I don’t want to preserve ranching history here if it’s going to be like ranching history that we preserve at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Montana. They can tell a story much better than we can when it comes to the implements, the artifacts, and the practices of cattle ranching in western America. On the other hand, if it has to do with early Spanish and Mexican settlement, or something, then that’s something unique here, and something worthy of our energy to invest. And I want to see that that kind of thing is done.

PITT: How about the movie connection?

ECK: Well, the movie connection is definitely something that we need to pay attention to as well. I don’t fool myself. I don’t think that the [movie] ranches are as significant as the studios downtown, but the studios downtown are gone. And, at least some people say that Paramount Ranch is the most significant remaining complex of buildings and facilities-- an institution, a factory. It was a film factory, there’s no question about it. And there are enough remnants there that it probably is the most significant remaining cultural complex from the golden era of motion pictures. And that’s definitely something that we

need to methodically disclose, preserve in the best way, and insure for the public. So we definitely will want to attend to that.

PITT: Well, Art, I have found you as a narrator very eloquent and thoughtful and responsive and informative. I thank you for taking this time.

ECK: Thank you, Len. It's nice to just take a moment and reflect a little bit.

End of Tape 2, Side B

End of Interview

— VII —

THE CONSERVANCY CONNECTION

An Interview with Joseph T. Edmiston, AICP

Mr. Edmiston's interview took place on two days, August 16, and September 24, 1999. In 1977 he was director of the state Comprehensive Planning Commission for the Santa Monicas, and in 1978 he was appointed to head the successor agency, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. In both posts he was intimately involved in the process that formed the NRA.

Interviewee: Joseph T. Edmiston
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape 1, Side A

PITT: This is Leonard Pitt interviewing Joseph Edmiston. We are sitting on a beautiful patio at his headquarters in Ramirez Canyon. It is August 16th. Joe, maybe you could tell me how the weather has been this summer up here.

EDMISTON: Well, the weather has just been fantastic here in paradise. Paradise as defined as Ramirez Canyon in Malibu.

PITT: The voice level looks good. We have agreed to refer to each other as Len or Leonard, and Joe. The main theme here is your career from about November, 1972 until about 1980 or '81. I would like to ask you first some background questions. Could you tell us, Joe, something about your background--where you were born and raised, your education, first jobs?

EDMISTON: I was born in 1948 in what was then unincorporated East Los Angeles--it's now called Monterey Park--and lived in a house my father built. He never had a mortgage on his house, saved up during the war [World War II] and built his dream little Cape Cod house, then surrounded by open space. I remember hiking up the Monterey Hills up above East Los Angeles College. There was nothing there except mustard fields. And, of course, development encroached there and all of those nice hills are now totally developed. That's one of my earliest memories.

My parents were very active in the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations, so I grew up with that as a background. Among old-time Sierra Clubbers. They were young then and they were involved in the Club and now some are fairly old and I'll go to meetings and they'll tell stories which are faintly embarrassing: "I remember little Joe when he was drawing pictures in the back of the Sierra Club library when we had our conservation committee meetings." So it's always been public policy in conservation--it was then conservation--the word "environment" hadn't caught on as it did after Earth Day. In East Los Angeles College I was student body president [and] was very active in the debate program. [I] got a debate scholarship to USC [University of Southern California].

A first job I had after USC was as a process server. That was kind of an interesting thing. Very active in the Sierra Club and I was going to law school at the time. Larry Moss who subsequently became Undersecretary of Resources [in the California Resources Agency] under Claire Dedrick called me into his office one day and he said, "You know, we've had a real trouble with the Coastal Commission." This was in 1972, excuse me, early 1973. Proposition 20 of the Coastal Act had been passed in November of '72, and in February of '73 the Coastal [Zone Conservation] Commission began operations. I was very involved in the passage of the proposition on a volunteer level and attended those first Coastal Commission meetings which lasted way, way early into the morning. They were basically giving away the store. By the way, as you come up Pacific Coast Highway passing Corral Canyon, there is one condo complex. It stands out, there's a free and clear beach on either side. There is one condo complex. That is E-1, exemption #1. Those people went to the Coastal Commission and they said, "We had a gleam in our eye to build this project." And at that point the Coastal Commission was approving everything, and they said, "Oh, you had a gleam in your eye before the Coastal Act was approved? Well, give this man an exemption." It turned out you could only get legally an exemption if you had had substantial building--a building permit and then substantial building. Well, they had a building permit but they hadn't done any building at all. I remember driving up and trying to find where this building was that they had said, "Oh, yes, we poured all this money into this." Of course, it wasn't there. That really just incensed me and I joined the local committee of the Sierra Club dealing with coastal issues.

Anyway, to get back to this conversation, Larry Moss said, "We've got some funding from a foundation and we're going to fund somebody for six months to whip the Coastal Commission into shape." And I said, "I'm your guy." I was actually making pretty good money going to law school at night and serving process during the day and I went down to $500-a-month salary. We called that the gas-and-granola salary, because that's all you could afford. Six months later, when they extended the position, they increased the salary to $750 a month, and that was the most satisfying salary increase I've ever had, because that meant literally, Oh, boy, we go to movies instead of once a month, maybe once every weekend. We were living in Westwood at the time. That was before Westwood had come on the hard times as it has today. It was probably the most trendy spot and it was hard to participate in the Westwood environment on 500 bucks a month.

Looking back on it, the entire environmental movement was extraordinarily naive. The idea that [all] the Coastal Commission needed was somebody to stand up and say, Oh, that's a bad project, and then they would all of a sudden say, Oh, yes. We didn't recognize that before. Thank you, Mr. Edmiston for telling us. We'll turn the project down. You're laughing. I laugh. Really, there was that kind of a feeling back then. There was a feeling that the voters had approved the Coastal Act [and] publicity was so virulent it was going to stop development. I think some of the environmentalist supporters of the Coastal Act thought, Hey, if Butcher Ford [Agency] is saying this is what the Coastal Act will do, great! Maybe it'll really do this.

The Coastal Act set up a very cumbersome process--regional commissions. If you didn't like the decision of the Regional Commission you could appeal it to the Statewide Commission. And the Statewide Commission was actually a fairly environmental body, but the Regional Commissions were wholly controlled essentially by local government

pro-development forces. That created a tension and it created the opportunity for the developers to ramrod a lot of projects through. And so my function was to appear at the Regional Commission levels, and then appeal to the State Commission those really bad projects.

That was an incredible job. I had a 1967 Rambler and I would basically drive up and down the coast. Sierra Club meetings, Regional Commission meetings, activists, looking at projects, and then testifying. Thank God the Rambler had a reclining seat, because at the end of the month if there wasn't the money to pay the motel bill, they still expected me to show up at the meetings. It was something only a young man can do. I would never do that kind of thing now, but it was a lot of fun and it taught me some rather fundamental things that I've applied ever since. And that was, in the regulatory process you win until you lose.

I would say there are maybe eight to a dozen major, major projects that were turned down either at the regional level on occasion, but mostly at the state level, and they keep coming back and coming back. And sometimes with only very minor modifications. Then the Commission would--just as a door responding to a battering ram--eventually the door would splinter and they'd say, Okay, go ahead. Maybe there was a small park area, maybe not. Maybe there was some mitigation, maybe the project was cut back, but we realized that these projects were over-inflated anyway.

I remember a case in Orange County where the developer got at the Regional Commission level everything that they had asked for, and at the State Commission level had voluntarily cut the project back. It was attributed, and I claimed credit for it, that it was because we had appealed and we were making this big deal. Later I found out that the developer had never anticipated getting as many units, had thought he was going to be cut back, didn't have the financing, and had this whole other plan ready to go, which was the real plan. They were just playing mind games. I have seen this now consistently--nobody goes in for the project that they expect to get out. And there's this process of the regulatory [body]: "We'll cut you back but not cut you back so much that you're really going to bleed too much, because we know if you bleed you're going to go to the Legislature and complain about us and therefore we don't want that." So that process, while it makes projects better, is essentially a design review process. It doesn't really say, We're going to save large swatches of the coast, large portions of habitat, large portions of open space, because it can't.

And especially recently after the Supreme Court decisions you're finding they're not even considering this. This was pre-Noland, pre some of the Supreme Court decisions of the recent Anton Scalia decisions, that severely restrict the power of regulation in land use. In the '70s we were still dealing with very expansive California liberal Supreme Court cases which said that unless you deprive an owner of <u>all</u> economic value, you do not have a taking. So we were able to say, Well, there's still recreation on the beach, you can still lease out for agriculture, grow flowers on this open space, whatever this kind of thing was. And the law at that time was that that was not a taking. But the takings law was not as important as the politics of it--the Commission was afraid to really anger, substantially, the development forces for fear of what would happen in the Legislature. And during the first phase of the Coastal Commission--this was the initiative phase from 1973 to 1976--the fear was, "Well if we are too tough on development then it'll be bad for us when the Coastal Plan comes up for adoption in 1976." And subsequent to 1976, it

was, “Well, it’ll be bad for us because we won’t get our appropriation next year or the Legislature will pass a bill that will reduce our jurisdiction, so that’s why we have to be more concerned about what the development interests are saying.”

The basic fact of the matter is that the majority of the appointing authorities are concerned with where the campaign contributions are and in California there’s no way of avoiding that. There were some extraordinary abuses that we were vaguely aware of that came really to the fore after I left that process. You know Mark Nathanson going to jail. And there were a lot of other allegations that were swirling around, none of which were proven. I don’t think that they were looked into as seriously as when the whole FBI started its investigations largely around Willie Brown. This was an offshoot of their efforts to really, I think, get Willie Brown.

So when I moved up to Sacramento as a Sierra Club lobbyist--this was in ’75 when the Coastal Act was going to be the number one thing in the legislative agenda for ’76. I was up in Sacramento for almost two years--I believe ’75- ’76 through early ’77. I saw how the sausage was made and I had frequently been involved in legislation before that for the Sierra Club, but not on a daily basis, and that was a pretty interesting time. Again, it just confirmed the idea that there were too many forces at work over which we’d never have any control such that regulation is just an impossible solution to environmental problems. Nothing that I have seen subsequently has changed that pretty basic orientation, even as to such things as water pollution. I think the way of dealing with this is wholly economic. In that sense, I’m a “Tom Graffer”--[follower of Thomas] Tom Graff of [the] Environmental Defense Fund. Tom Graff says we can do away with all the pollution regulations if we just price things at their true price cost, not only in the marketplace, but in the marketplace plus the cost to the larger marketplace of the environment.

This had a direct bearing on the next job because I was sitting in my Sierra Club office in, I guess it was late ’76, and got a call from [Charles] Charley Warren’s office. Charley Warren was then chairman of the Assembly Resources Committee. He went on to be head of CEQ [President's Council on Environmental Quality] under [Pres. Jimmy] Carter. He said, “Charley would like to see you. Come on over.” So I went over to the Capitol. This was after six. And Charley said, “You know, all this controversy about this Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission, I want you to consider taking the job.” So I said, “Yes, it’s interesting.” I had actually testified on the bill before, when the chief Sierra Club lobbyist had been ill or unavailable. When I had testified in ‘76 one of the critical points when this bill was going through was to create a Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission.

I remember my impression that everybody was all over the map. This was when the bill still had a regulatory component to it. Ultimately, [Assemblyman] Howard [L.] Berman (D-Sherman Oaks) had to emend out all the regulatory provisions of the bill. It started out as a virtual Coastal Commission duplicate [with] regulatory powers over development of the mountains plus a development plan. In the very end stage of the process, he cut out the regulation section and just kept the section dealing with the Comprehensive Plan. But I remember at the time, when it still had regulation, it was just a hodgepodge of equal pro and con, and the pro had five or six different elements. I walked out of that hearing saying, “Gee, I’m glad I’m dealing with an uncomplicated issue like the coast.” Really. And I recall that. And I had a kind of a momentary, “Gee, do

I want to do this?" and looked up the bill and then that night said, "Yes, I think some things could be done with this."

Then I got interviewed by [William] Bill Press. Bill Press, who's now a commentator, was the Director of Office of Planning and Research for Governor [Edmund G., "Jerry"] Brown [Jr.]. I remember the interview with the governor. Everybody kept saying he has really weird schedules. He'll probably deal with this late some night, so you be ready. And Bill Press emphasized that I had to be right there because the governor, if he didn't get the first name on the list on the phone he might go to the second, that kind of thing.

PITT: Excuse me. The appointment was for? . . .

EDMISTON: Director of the Comprehensive Planning Commission.

PITT: And it's about . . .

EDMISTON: February of '77.

PITT: Please continue.

EDMISTON: I was romantically affiliated with a woman at the time and she had a five-year-old child. We decided after a month or so of this staying by the telephone we were going to go out--this was '77, a major drought year--and went miniature golfing. I came back about 10:30 at night and checked the answering service. In those days people had answering services. This frantic woman at the answering service said, "The governor called! I mean the governor called! The governor! Himself?" She gave me this number that went into his little private cubby. Bill Press answered and said, "Where the bleep have you been? I told you to be by the phone!" I said, "Well, I went out miniature golfing." "Miniature golfing! Get your ass down here!" I set the world land speed record between Penryn and Sacramento. And there still is a way you present yourself in front of a camera and press a button, and you can get in at late night there. The state police looked at everybody. Well, anyway, I was ushered in and the very first thing that Jerry Brown said is, "Miniature golfing? Why were you miniature golfing? They waste water. They have all those fountains that waste water." And I saw my career going. [laughter] So I said, "Well, Governor Brown, it's a really good water conservation because they recycle the water and it cools the atmosphere." And he looked over at Bill Press and he said, "Give those people one of our water conservation awards." [laughter] Now I suspect that one of Bill Press's main jobs was to say, "Yes," to those kinds of things and never do it, or, on the other hand, this miniature golfing place in Roseville might very well have received something in the mail from the governor and said, "How did we get this?" I don't know whether they recycled the water or not. I hope that they did.

Anyway, the rest of the interview went very well and the next day I showed up at the governor's office and got my little piece of paper and they said, "Go over to the Department of General Services and they'll get you set up." And by the way, it was supposed to have started January 1, but Jerry Brown was very tardy, so it's now two months later, we have to have a meeting immediately and so you have to start

immediately. I told the Sierra Club I would come back on weekends to fix up the files. Next day [I] flew down because they said, In 10 days you have to have the first Commission meeting. It turned out we couldn't organize it that quickly, but they gave me a little blue charge card--state charge card.

Now it turns out in state government this is like the American Express card. Don't leave home without it. You can charge everything--office buildings, cars, airplanes. [I] never charged an airplane but the state has a fleet of airplanes. And they gave me this book, all the services and the charge card and the guy who did this said, "Now, remember, don't over spend. Because I [am] the guy that had to shut down the Agricultural Labor Relations Commission when they over spent their budget and they thought they could get an extra budget from the Legislature and they didn't get it. I was the one who had to shut them down. I put seals on the doors and kicked everybody out. So mind your budget."

I'm (a) impressed that there's a charge card and (b) thoroughly intimidated by this guy. The budget was $100,000, pretty much to do with as we wanted. Obviously, that wasn't enough. We subsequently got additional appropriations. But that was all the introduction to government that they gave us and said, Here, take this charge card down to the State Office Building and they'll set you up with an office and everything. Which is exactly what they did.

They put us down in the basement with the investigators for the Fair Political Practices Commission. This was kind of an open-office compound. There were glass partitions but you could hear everything that was going on. As I was always working late, I would hear these investigators transcribing their interviews with these FPPC suspects who were all these legislators. So it was a fascinating time (laughing) late at night in the basement of the State Office Building. Subsequently, FPPC got better digs and we got better digs so my inside scoop as to who was going to get indicted was [laughter] lost. But it was an interesting time. We worked very hard. We had a team of interns, and I don't think any people ever worked as hard. They came down for three months from UC Santa Cruz. This was Dr. Jim Pepper's program. It was a nascent GIS [Geographic Information System] program, although most of the work was not computerized and computer systems [such as ARC INFO] were really only beginning to become commercially viable. So we had a whole system of overlay maps and that sort of thing, but it was all hand done. Now you would digitalize all that information.

Our team, I guess it was six or eight students, really worked their butts off. They had two apartments and people slept on the floor. It was a very creative experience working with these young people who pulled together virtually all the information that had been developed on the Santa Monica Mountains. And that's basically what they did. They spent a summer pulling together existing sources of information. And we rapidly realized that we could not do very much original research. It would have to be based on what other people had done. We found that the information in many cases was too spotty to base any scientifically valid conclusions on.

It was good that these were students because they were exposed to the most cutting edge planning concepts. We're talking about mid-1977 or early '78--and two of the students we kept on who had been interns we kept on as full-time planners. They interrupted their college studies and subsequently went back and took the requisite courses in summer programs and all. Bruce Eisner was one of them and Bruce is now

chief of land acquisition for the Tahoe Conservancy. Randy Friedman is another and he works for the U.S. Navy doing environmental reviews. They stayed on and they identified the big information gap as being about habitat. Just at that time Dr. Michael Soule--who was then at UC San Diego and went up to Santa Cruz (he's not at Santa Cruz anymore, I don't know where he is), was just developing the methodology for determining the dynamics of why populations--when they are reduced to almost island proportions within urban areas--why they decline when you would think intuitively there was enough habitat area. In fact, the two are not linked and it is [the] linkages that are important, so that you can have large habitat blocks, but if there is development that prohibits connectivity between these habitat blocks then what you have is a decreasing population.

Let me fast forward now to '90 or '91 when the National Park Service brought Soule here to discuss those very issues [about] the Santa Monica Mountains. What he said to me [when] we went on a tour of a couple of areas was, "What we're dealing with is the possibility of having an overpopulation of species [such] as coyotes and ground squirrels unless we protect the migratory passage of the higher predators. Let's go back now to '77 and '78. This [concept] was being hinted at but we really didn't understand the mechanisms of it. I'm proud to say the Comprehensive Planning Commission identified these wildlife corridor concepts and said, What we need to do is protect wildlife corridors. This was a counter-intuitive concept to the, if you will, the landscape-province or the landscape-architect view. We were caught right in-between. And there's a lot in the Comprehensive Plan that still is the landscape-architect view, all the way back to Frederick Olmsted**.** [It is that] if you stand in the center of a property and look all around you and if you see beauty, you have a park. And that carried forward really to one of the greatest of all our State Parks directors, William Penn Mott, which was basically his philosophy--if you saw beauty and you were able to protect that visual beauty, then that's what the park was. We were coming to the realization that that was not sufficient. What would make it sufficient we didn't know. So we made some assumptions that have held up. We didn't give them the priority that we should have and I think that the thing that I would change, if anything, in the Comprehensive Plan is the concept that you have to do the most important thing first. Not the easiest thing, not the most politically expedient thing, but the most important thing. Whether we could have developed a political constituency for doing that at the time I don't know.

PITT: What would have been the most important thing?

EDMISTON: Buying up the pieces adjacent to the Ventura Freeway and the 118 Freeway to assure north-south continuity. And it would have been expensive but it would have yielded, I think, better opportunities than we have now, and now we're at a point where to make that continuity you're going to have to do either over crossings or under crossings, and those are extremely expensive. Now whether it would have been possible [I don't know]. I wonder, and I even question the commitment of some of the people in the environmental community now to that kind of a concept because the constituents were roughly divided between hard-core environmentalists who saw themselves as true environmentalists and homeowner groups. The environmentalists, however, were not notably motivated by scientific concerns. And I would consider most of them were

aesthetic environmentalists. Nothing wrong with aesthetics and I count myself 90 percent in that category. But the idea that you would buy commercial land which, in and of itself, might not look or be pristine--certainly next to the freeway--is not everybody's idea of the first land you ought to buy in the mountains.

Again, to fast forward to what we've done in the Santa Clarita Woodlands. We took an entirely different approach in the Santa Clarita woodlands [which] was authorized to be part of our jurisdiction in the early '90s. When we began the acquisition process there, we started right along the freeway, right along the access road. Some [accesses were] at exorbitant prices, over $100,000 per acre--one of our acquisitions was $130,000 or $140,000--an enormous amount of money for commercially zoned property. Yet [it] froze the access to about 2,000 acres of Chevron property in the hinterlands which we were ultimately able to get for $2,000 an acre. So, again, we learned.

At the time of the Comprehensive Planning Commission we had the wildlife corridor concept but it was not that this is the most important thing that you should do. But we did develop a system of park acquisitions that we called first and second priority acquisitions. With two exceptions, each one of those acquisitions have been completed, either by the National Park Service or by the [Santa Monica Mountains] Conservancy (SMMC). In the one case, a guy named [Ronald] Ron Semler, back at the very beginning of the Conservancy, hired [two people. One was] Stewart Udall (former Secretary of the Interior, [whose brother,] Mo Udall, was a high-ranking member of the Natural Resources--back then they called it the Interior--Committee in Congress. [He also hired] Evelle Younger who had just been forcibly retired as attorney general when he lost the race for governor to Jerry Brown. The two "consultants" hired by Semler said, We don't want you to pursue this acquisition. We're not going to sell. You try condemnation and we're going to have your gonads up on the wall, and we said, Well, we're not really interested in condemning on Mr. Semler. That [involved] Saddle Rock Ranch which was a no. 1 priority park acquisition and is still a private ranch. Mr. Semler ultimately was convicted and spent some time in jail for selling high technology weapons to the Chinese, but that's a different story.

Then there was a project that the Central States Teamsters Pension Fund had developed--the Beverly Park Estates Project. That came on the market in '78. We had already started a program of land acquisition--a pre-land acquisition program--and this legislation was carried by Howard Berman. If you ever do a study of the Conservancy really Howard Berman ought to be somebody interviewed because he's had a significant impact not only on the Conservancy but as a congressman on what's happened in the NRA [National Recreation Area]. He was in the Assembly at the time and majority leader, and he pushed through a bill that authorized acquisition of land where we knew we were going to be recommending creation of new parkland. We thought that these properties were going to be lost unless we went ahead. This was money that was reprogrammed by the State Parks Department away from Santa Monica Mountains projects. State Parks dropped plans to buy what ultimately became Soka University and the Los Angeles Athletic Club property in Lower Topanga Canyon.

We recommended to Howard Berman that that money stay in the Santa Monicas so we had a whole program for its expenditure. We did not include Beverly Park Estates, which is right next to Franklin Canyon. That was probably, project-wise, the single biggest mistake we made. It was about $11 1/2 million at the time and we thought that

would be too much and that people would say, Well, you're over grasping and your not just reprogramming money, you're trying to establish a new land acquisition agency.

All these acquisitions, by the way, were to be done by State Parks. Unfortunately, this was the time--that was 1978--the treasury was bulging and as a result of the fact that there had not been property tax relief and the treasury was bulging, we had Prop 13. But the Legislature that year passed an enormous "park-barrel" bill and we really should have been in there, could have been in there for more. It was a failure of nerve on my part that we did not go for that.

If you have questions to ask of me, I'm sort of stream of consciousness.

PITT: No. This is very good. This [anticipates my questions]. I asked you for your background. Right after that I would have said, "In your own words tell your own story [laughter] from 1970 up to about 1981." I didn't do that, but you're doing it, and you're doing just fine.

EDMISTON: We're now in 1978. We've gotten most of the background material and we're now into the policy phase of making some determinations. I remember Bill Press called me. He served on the governing board of the Comprehensive Planning Commission. There were, I believe, 14 or 16 members [on] the Comprehensive Planning Commission. We can fill in that number later. The membership pretty much represented everything from extreme property-rights advocates to extreme no-development-anywhere [advocates], and a lot of people in between. It was chaired by Councilman Marvin Braude, who was an excellent chair. But [Press] called me and said, "I want to have lunch with you before the next meeting," and so we did in a wonderful Chinese restaurant in Little Tokyo called Far East Cafe. I don't think it's there anymore, but it was a wonderful Norman Chandler type of place where cops would eat and all sorts of lowlife characters.

PITT: Raymond Chandler.

EDMISTON: Raymond Chandler. Right. Norman Chandler, too, [laughter] but different. Raymond Chandler sort of place that was just wonderful. I remember he said, "If you're looking to this Commission to form some direction, you're not going to get it. If you're looking for consensus, it's not going to happen. You're going to have to step out and take the lead here, and basically decide what needs to be done and then ram it down throats because consensus isn't getting us anywhere." Not that I needed anybody to kick start me on that, but actually I guess in a sense, I did. I had hoped that the process called [getting] "the facts" would become so clear that you could have a process that was, as much as possible, fact dependent. In that I was very influenced by the approach of [Joseph] Bodovitz [and] Mel Lane of the Coastal Plan. Mel Lane kept saying, "You can recommend anything in the plan as long as it's fact-based." Mel Lane was chairman of the Coastal Commission. Joe Bodovitz was executive director. "But it has to be fact-based, it has to be science-based, because when you get up in front of the Legislature you have to justify it. And by virtue of being science-based, you take it out of politics."

Now, of course, that was a nice thing to say, and you can say that 90 percent of the Coastal Plan is science-based, although it is the interpolations from science. Science doesn't say to X, Y, and Z, science says, Here's the state, here's what we know about

natural processes, and there has to be a political process that says, Okay, this political process will yield this effect on the environment. But that connection was never explicitly made. It sounded very good and I really liked the idea that you should have a planning process, a local planning process, based on the idea that you had your inputs from the ground, and you built from the ground up, and it was all very rational, and it met with planning theory. But when the time comes, the governor's man on the commission [is] telling you, This isn't going to work. You're never going to get this group of people to agree no matter what a scientist says, or no matter what your interns [have gathered as] information. It's a political process and you've got to ram that political process through.

So we started to really turn it from a consensus building process to a process that would develop a very specific set of planning recommendations. And that started to create enormous friction on the Commission. Marvin Braude, to his credit, said, "Go ahead. I'll whip the politics into shape," and he was able to do that to some extent. His thinking about what he could do to whip it into shape was a little bit more than what he could actually do, but he was a good chairman.

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Let us see if I have muffled some of the background noise. (Tape on and off while adjusting chairs and levels). The tape is now going. Please, Joe, proceed.

EDMISTON: So '78 dawns. [A] meeting took place. We decide, okay, we're going to have to get tougher in making staff-driven policy recommendations and abjuring the possibility of consensus. This immediately made each wing of the Commission--both the pro-development and pro-environment extreme wings--very upset because a consensus document would have meant that they would have had some degree of control over the outcome. If they refuse to get to consensus, then you couldn't get a consensus. And the pro-development end, of course, wanted a consensus on a very mild document, and the environmental end, on the other side [wanted the opposite]. Those were the jockeying points. It soon became clear that it was going to be a decision by a majority of the commissioners, and if a minority didn't like it they could file a minority report. We were not going to operate on a consensus basis. This tended not to move conciliation toward the center, but it tended to make them more extreme in their demands. And so you had one group of commissioners that felt that we were basically selling out, and one group of commissioners [who felt we were not going far enough].

June Glenn was advocate for the property owners. I think to this day she thinks that I'm some sort of a socialist pinko. I remember my first association with the computer world when I went to her home and tried to make nice and talk to her and say, You know we are really doing good things here. We're not really out to screw the landowners.

She was very gracious. It was in her home and she had a home office, and she had one of the very early Apple computers, and she was saying, "And this way I can spew out

to my mailing list, and I've got them all computerized." Of course this was her newsletter about how terrible the Santa Monica Mountains Planning Commission was. And I didn't know that this newsletter was going out. She had this whole newsletter that she had to her people about the Commission meetings and how we were screwing the landowners. And I just realized, Wait a minute, there's this whole world swirling around us here, which is not based on fact. It's based on her pumping up this constituency. And, of course, I was interested in the technology, but more interested in what she was doing with the technology. But it really told me, Here's the power of a middle-aged person who has a lot of time on her hands and this new technology. Then it was applied to mailing lists. You still had to use the U.S. mail. The Internet was not there. Of course, it's now been expanded manifold.

Yet it became clear that the policies that we were going to be advocating, based on what we thought were good science and good planning principles, were not going to be accepted by that fringe, essentially because the information needed to justify harder positions, and certainly to justify softer positions, was not there. The science was 100 percent against softer positions. Science pointed in the direction of harder positions, but wasn't there yet.

The question then became, were we going to generate a document that was dead-on-arrival in Sacramento, or were we going to generate a document that had some Sacramento viability? And that related to the two big things that happened in 1978: the passage of the congressional legislation--that was the big thing; but in terms of the Comprehensive Planning Commission the decision to extend the time for producing the report and to give us an additional appropriation to do a better job in terms of an economic study [was equally important].

Let me deal first with the internal commission and then let me talk about the relationship with the Planning Commission and the National Recreation Area. And if I can, I'd sort of like to complete this capsule history of the Commission and how we developed the [Comprehensive] Plan, and then look at that interaction separately.

PITT: Sure.

EDMISTON: [phone rings] I promised you no telephones and here's a telephone. [ringing stops] Anyway, the approach that was politically the most expedient was to take the developers head on. We knew we couldn't skirt it, and we knew that if we tried to placate them in a way that didn't have any scientific validity to it, we would get trampled by the enviros. And so we designed an economic study that, head-on, dealt with the questions. If you reduced development density, if you take all this land out of the tax base, if you take it away from potential development, what are going to be the economic impacts both for local government, to the development industry, and to the affected land owners? And there was some concern about our doing that. Some of the environmentalists said, Oh, you won't have any trouble because development doesn't pay its way anyway. And there was some contemporary study by Livingston and Blaney, I believe, in '75 or '76 about the costs of sprawl, the costs of development, and they concluded that development in many cases didn't pay for itself. There was no question in our minds that an application of that cookie-cutter didn't work, because we weren't talking about filling in the San Fernando Valley or East Bay subdivisions or Moreno

Valley. We were talking about some pretty high-end subdivisions. We were talking about a unique market. So the fight over that went to the Legislature and the bill which would both give the money for this study and extend the life of the Commission. We knew we had to extend it because we couldn't get things done in time. [We] didn't have the time to put this political jig-saw puzzle together. And the bill carried by Howard Berman was defeated. It passed the Assembly, went to the Senate, and was defeated.

The Senator from the district was a guy named Lou Cusonovich , a Republican. "Big Lou" was about six-three, six-four and never saw a [development] project that he didn't like, never saw a landowner he didn't like, and was a big opponent, and had been responsible for killing the regulatory bill that Howard Berman had introduced before. Remember we described that the Comprehensive Planning Commission originally had a regulatory component to it that was amended out of the bill. He was responsible for doing that. And Cusonovich killed that legislation. The afternoon that that happened, I met with Howard Berman. I said, "Well what do we do?" He said, "Joe, we don't have the votes, and you've got to turn Cusonovich."

PITT: You've got to what?

EDMISTON: "Turn Cusonovich [around]."

PITT: Right.

EDMISTON: I thought I was dealing with an impossible situation here. So I went to see Cusonovich, and that's where the old lobbying came in.

I'll tell a little bit of a story on myself and about lobbying in general and what it means. When I was a volunteer with the Sierra Club I went up [to the capital]. The first time I ever worked in Sacramento would have been in the late 1960s. The main Sierra Club lobbyist, John Zierold--still an icon in my mind--was on a bill [concerning] state parks and the bad things that off-road vehicles are doing to state parks. And it needed Jim Keysor's vote. He was an assemblyman in the [San Fernando] Valley. He was generally a pretty good vote but he was on the fence on this bill. So I was ushered in with Zierold, and I was a college student, young, and I had all the information, and I rat-a-tat-tatted the facts. I'm looking at the guy, and he's looking at me, but I don't get the feeling that, with all this information that I'm giving--and of course I'm going faster because he had only about ten minutes--I'm just not getting the feeling that I'm getting responsiveness. And then he starts fidgeting, looks at his watch, and it becomes clear that the meeting is over. And I was just terribly disappointed because I don't have a commitment from him, he's not with the program, and Zierold kind of pushes me out ahead. Oh, and to begin the interview, Zierold talks to this guy who had a gall bladder operation or something. He starts taking up a lot of the time talking about this guy's health and I'm just incensed. [I'm thinking] I'm here, this is my time. You're talking about this guy's health. We don't have enough time to get into the issue anyway. It's a very important issue. He shunts me ahead--the door's still open--Zierold takes Jim Keysor's elbow and with his hand on his upper arm and says, "It's a good bill." [laughter] And Keysor changes, smiles, "Oh yes, got my vote."

Everything that I had said was totally irrelevant. It was the personal relationship between Zierold and Keysor, and many, many times, especially in the pre-Prop 140 era, the pre-term limits era, personal relationships meant an awful lot.

So I walk into Big Lou Cusonovich's office and there is no rhetorical strategy for me other than just complete submission to fate. So that's what I do. And I said, "Big Lou"--he loved being [called that]--"Big Lou you really kicked me in the solar plexus and I still haven't gotten my breath." And he laughed, "Yes I did, didn't I. I beat you up real good, didn't I?" "Yes, you sure did. I don't know what to do." He says, "Well, what's your future?" He starts talking that way. "You going to run for office?" "No, no." "Oh you should." And he starts talking, "You know when I was your age." Blah, blah, blah. "I never thought I'd do this." Blah, blah, blah. "Now I'm here. Never thought I'd be talking to you. So what do you want?" [laughter] "Well, Senator, we'd like reconsideration on that bill." "Oh. Yes, I guess I beat you up too much." [laughter] Tell Howard to give me a call." So I go back to Howard and I say, "I think he's going to change his vote, but he said you should call him." And so Howard put the call in and I was there. "Senator, I heard you met with Mr. Edmiston." I couldn't hear the other side. [Howard said] "Next week. Thank you." [laughter] It was reconsidered the next week. Unanimous vote. He pulled all the Republicans. It was the whole thing. The exact same bill, exact same bill.

Now he could have defeated all of our efforts, and I don't know if he knew at the time that he could. But what it was, we didn't talk about the merits at all. It was that he had screwed me personally and I guess he thought I was a young person of some merit. And to this day [I don't know] whether he didn't realize or whether he didn't really care or whether he had done what he did because I made the abject [move] and kissed his boot, and that made him feel good. Anyway, he was eventually pensioned off into a sinecure with the horse-racing board. And I understand he had a very good several years there. He's passed away now.

So the bill went through. We had the dollars. We did the study. In the process of doing that study the building industry association did a contrary study: for everything that we said, Here's what the analysis is, they came up with a different analysis. But theirs was so superficial and we had a pretty thorough analysis that was done by a very well respected economic consultant. The firm is broken up now--Williams & Kubelbeck. We selected a firm that basically worked for developers, so that it would not be some sort of a green firm, or a planning firm. This was an economic analysis firm that basically did a development analysis which was submitted to lenders.

We now come to the public hearing process, where we have the draft of the plan and we are going out to everybody and anybody, and we have the outlines of the economic study. And there we confronted the political backlash. This was the landowner backlash.

The chief planner that we had at that time was a former planning director of Marin County. We were very lucky to get him. He'd also applied for the Comprehensive Planning Commission executive director position. And just a few weeks after I was appointed, I got a call from him, and he said, "You know, I'm really interested in this, and I think it would be a tremendous professional challenge, and not withstanding the fact that I applied for your job, I'd like to meet you and I'd like to pursue it." He was considerably older. He was probably in his mid-40s at the time, and I was 27 or 28. At the time, I remember, I was the youngest agency director. And I liked the idea of having a

more mature planner, especially somebody who had applied for the job, and we really clicked. His name was Werner von Gundell. He had left Nazi Germany. He was German [and] he had grown up under the Nazis and had left at some point in the middle of the war, and was able to get out. Decidedly he was not a militarist in any way, shape, or form. I don't know all of his family background, but they had suffered in some way. He wasn't Jewish, and it wasn't the concentration camp issue, but he had gotten out to get away. And I remember one particularly vivid incident at a hearing in Thousand Oaks where a concentration camp survivor said, "I put all my investments into land in the Santa Monica Mountains, and then this Nazi," pointing over to Werner, "this Nazi is going to take it away from me. This is worse than what they did in the concentration camp, worse than this," and he pulled back his shirtsleeve to reveal the tattooed number.

I guess that was the worst part, but it was by no means atypical. What had happened in the mountains, in the early '60s especially, [is that] the county had passed what they thought was a fine zoning ordinance--that was actually in 1965--establishing the Malibu Zoned District, where the base level zoning was about 2 1/2 acres per unit. One unit for 2 1/2 acres. Sometimes, on particularly difficult land, it went up to 5 acres. But that was the base level zoning for most of the interior of the Santa Monica Mountains. So, if you purchased as little as 10 acres virtually anywhere, you had the option of making a considerable amount of money on it, at least theoretically. And a number of people put retirement [money] and at that time, in the '60s, you could still buy on contracts, so they had these contracts, and 10 years later they were now in possession of these properties. A lot of retirement income went into securing these properties, and the retirement theory was, I'll develop one for my retirement, develop one for the kids, and sell off the other two, and that will pay for my costs. At least, that's what they were saying. And this was duplicated--10 acres, 20 acres, 30 acres, 50 acres--all dotted throughout the mountains.

And these were the landowners that got together in a group called Concerned Citizens for Property Rights. One of the subsequent board members, the immediate past executive director of the Mountains Restoration Trust, Peter Ireland, son of actor John Ireland, was the spokesperson for this group. He subsequently has changed his mind about 180 degrees, but he was a very effective spokesperson for this group. They held mass meetings. I remember one meeting in Santa Monica had about 200 people at the Santa Monica Public Library. It was basically all these people who had had serious financial investments and if the down-zoning plan went through they would be significantly affected. On the other hand, we showed in the plan that if you built out to these kind of densities there was no way in the world you were going to be able to have the infrastructure to deal with it. The environmental consequences would be enormous and it would be an environmental impossibility to deal with this.

That group, I found out much later, was merely a shill for three or four major landowners, including the Tucker Land Co. We ultimately acquired their property. This was a big development up above Mandeville. But at the time, they had very good PR. They now call them "Astro-Turf campaigns," where it looks like Congress is getting all this input from the grassroots and really its all generated by the corporations. This was an Astro-Turf organization, but it was not apparent. And they did have real people who showed up at the meetings, but it was all generated by this group of two or three major developers.

Then there was another group which was ABCD--Advocates for Balanced California Development. And then they changed their names to Better California Development. This was a group of developers. They met regularly and, again, they paid a lobbyist. Les Cohen was their lobbyist in Sacramento. And he represented the rural counties and rural interests in Sacramento. It became clear that we were going to have to deal with these major groups and with the environmentalists. This was now late ’78, and this is where the interaction comes with the National Recreation Area, and the Comprehensive Plan. Dealing with these groups we had the environmentalists that still wanted the Coastal Commission view of the world, that is, a regulatory body: Have the plan submitted to the Legislature, the Legislature adopts the plan, gives it to a regulatory body like the Coastal Commission, only a mountains commission, and says; Okay, implement this plan, and don’t let the developers build beyond the envelope of the plan.

And so the environmentalist groups were primarily putting their emphasis on what the development recommendations would be in the [Comprehensive] Plan, putting the most emphasis on that. The staff was putting the most emphasis on what the Park and Recreation recommendations would be, because at that time it looked as though there was going to be major federal funding for the National Recreation Area. As the bill went through in the summer of ’78 this bill became more and more likely to pass.

When ’78 had first dawned, passage had seemed unlikely. There were hearings held. [Rep. Phillip] Burton came down, had meetings with everyone. It became clear that Burton was serious about this, and going back to Washington, it was getting more and more serious. The National Park Service came out, did some preliminary studies. You’ve got this in your previous [chronology].

On the staff level we saw a way--[as did] some key commissioners, Marvin Braude especially--where we could avoid what I thought was going to be an impossible fight. We couldn’t make the Plan green enough to withstand the developer onslaught. You couldn’t fill out the mandate of the [Comprehensive Planning] Commission and not have a pretty environmentally oriented document.

PITT: Can you say in a word what was the mandate of the Commission at this point?

EDMISTON: The Commission mandate was to produce a comprehensive plan involving all aspects, everything from park acquisition to transportation, land use, conservation, and to develop that plan and submit that plan to the Legislature, together with a mechanism for implementing the plan. And the big decision came in terms of what was going to happen probably [in] September of ’78. The bill was passed in October. We had been through the public hearing process. We had learned the level of vociferousness out there. We still had the environmental members of the Commission who were irredentist in their opposition to anything other than a regulatory body.

We had a meeting in Howard Berman’s office in Westwood. I made the case. What I said to Howard, generally, was, I am going to make my recommendations and the staff is going to make recommendations. We think that we have a majority of the commissioners, the people in the center, who are going to recommend that we not do a regulatory body. We recommend that the principle method of implementing this be local government cooperation, which is subdivision (n) of Section 507 of the National Parks and Recreation Act [of 1978], and that the carrot-and-stick approach be the principal

method of local implementation. But that the real way of carrying it out be through a program of land acquisition, and that land acquisition be the major method. And here's a bill that's likely to happen, and there should be a conservancy similar to the Coastal Conservancy to carry it out on the state level. And this will get us around the landowner objection because we'll be paying for the land, and it will better mesh with where the federal government is going with a national recreation area. And this is where the kinds of interests that split the environmental community come to the fore.

Sue Nelson was very much not into regulation at that time, and never has been. The approach of a number of the commissioners was that the National Recreation Area was essentially a Sue Nelson thing, and they didn't really think that the recreation area would deal with what they were primarily interested in, which was keeping development down. They basically represented a homeowner constituency. And Nita Rosenfeld, who I think represented the extreme end of that environmental position. [She] had been very active in fighting projects in Mandeville Canyon, [and] didn't really see that the National Park Service was going to be buying land in her area. Maybe that was a Ventura County solution, but it wasn't a solution for the more urban areas. She, as well as Kathy Gordon, who's the vice chair of the Commission, went to Howard Berman in this meeting and said, "Howard, if we go along with this way that Joe is proposing it's going to be the end of the Santa Monica Mountains. It will be turning the back on everything your supporters have worked for, that you've worked for, and it will be a flat-out sell-out."

At that point I did not know--I had my strong suspicions--but I didn't know if Howard would turn around and look at me and say, Well, the constituency groups here really feel very strongly about this. [But] he turned and said to Kathy Gordon and Nita Rosenfeld, "Show me a scenario where a coastal commission type bill passes. Show me any political scenario."

PITT: In the Legislature, he could not see that at that moment?

EDMISTON: Right. This is the early fall. I forget the exact date of the meeting; I think it was September of '78. I know that the federal bill had not passed yet, but it was pretty much viewed as a sure bet that it would pass. And they couldn't. They said, Well you have an obligation to do this. The fact that it won't pass immediately doesn't really mean anything. We should keep going.

[I recall] a little story about the Berman bill. There had been even a previous commission that had been established under Ronald Reagan, called the Ventura-Los Angeles Mountain and Coastal Study Commission, that had also been headed by Marvin Braude that actually had ended up with a surplus in their budget. And I'll tell you how that became important later on. But [he] had come up with a plan and that plan had called for a Coastal Commission type of approach. And Howard had introduced that legislation when he came into office in '73, and every time--'73, '74, '75--it had failed. In '76 he said, "This is the last time I going to do it," and that led to that compromise that I told you about. And so they said, "Well, it took four years just to introduce the right bill, and we'll keep hammering at the gates until we get the bill." And I said, "Unless there's an organization and a staff to provide the impetus for this thing, it'll just be citizen lobbyists up there confronted with the professional lobbyists of the development interests, and you won't have a staff to provide the information. And you won't have any ongoing source of

continuity. It is really next year--'79--or never." And they said, "You're just interested in perpetrating your job, you're selling out," and it was a very, very acrimonious meeting.

To this day, I think there are those in the environmental community who felt that had that bill been introduced in the pristine form that they wanted it, and if Howard Berman had really pushed harder and kept going, that that bill could have passed. Howard Berman didn't think so. I didn't think so. I do not think anybody who was looking fairly at that situation thought that it could happen, but [they had] a very definite sense of [having been] stabbed in the back.

In one sense I think that my Sierra Club background helped immensely in designing a plan, because I had been on the wrong receiving end of the regulatory process. I mean, I think that the environmentalists in many cases got screwed in the regulatory process, and saw how that was not yielding a positive environmental result. But a lot of folks thought, "He's an apostate. He used to work for the Sierra Club and now he's turned around and now he's making all these compromises, doesn't really have any values. How can somebody who used to work for the Sierra Club and advocate in front of the Coastal Commission, now recommend that we not do that approach and go to something which simply pays off the landowners not to develop." Those were some of the statements that were made: "He pays off land owners not to develop; They have no right to develop; Let them develop it one unit for 20 acres and regulate them."

That caused a breech which to this day--if you interview a number of people--they will say, Yes, a lot of good things have happened subsequently, but, but, we could have had it all. Notwithstanding the fact that many people in the coastal process now realize that a lot of time and arguments have been wasted and maybe there should have been some giant, billion-dollar coastal bond act to buy it all. I don't know how seriously it was dangled in front of the enviros in '76. There was a bond act, by the way, in '76. The Coastal Conservancy was established in '76. There was a bond and there was an offer made to drop the coastal bill and put [up] a billion dollars and buy up all the things you want, then leave us alone. That was never seriously entertained by the environmental community, so we don't really know how serious the development community was on that. I can't really say that that was a real time option. But that's the way it sounded to the environmentalists, that Edmiston is simply selling out, and to a certain extent Berman, although Berman was too powerful for them to label him, but Edmiston had exercised undue influence on Berman and had basically pushed him in that direction.

This was the inevitable consequence of the way '78 started out, which was Bill Press saying, "Joe, you've got take control of this process. You can't do it by consensus. You've got to see what's going to get to the end, and you've got to force the Commission to do this." And when I want to say "force," it wasn't a question of the vast majority of the commissioners who were middle-of-the-road. There was an entertainment attorney. There was a minority architect, elected officials who clustered around the center and really around the leadership of Marvin Braude. He called people up and said, This is the way we have to go.

PITT: What was a middle position at that point?

EDMISTON: The middle position really was the staff position basically. When I say staff position, I think anyone involved in that process saw it as being staff-driven because

the commissioners didn't want to take the heat for it. They were happy to vote for it, and certainly Marvin didn't want to take the heat for it. He's an elected official. So I was out there taking the heat, and this was for the position that, as I said, that the principal implementation would be through local governments, through the carrot-and-stick approach of Section 507 of the Act.

PITT: Of giving them grants?

EDMISTON: Right. Let me just leave it at that and get to the National Park Service part, rather than have a disjunctive part of this. I want to complete the Comprehensive Planning Commission part and then deal with the National Park Service part.

PITT: Please.

EDMISTON: So we have this rift, and this rift continues still to this day in many cases. I am absolutely comfortable with it. I've lost some sleep in not going after Beverly Park Estates. I've lost some sleep in not going after commercial property next to the 101 Freeway, but I've never lost any sleep about that position. That was the right thing to do.

Then in early '79 the bill is introduced to create a conservancy, linked on the Coastal Conservancy model, but with some important modifications. And some interesting things happen. Howard Berman introduces the bill and then he says, "You know, there's another bill that I've been asked to take by Kathy Gordon, who I mentioned earlier, and Nita, and some other people, that would simply extend the jurisdiction of the Coastal Conservancy to do this. But I'm going with the Commission's approach here. I just want you to know that I'm introducing both of them just to get it out into the public for discussion." "Well, all right," I replied, "a favor to Kathy Gordon." What I didn't know is that in the preceding three or four months there had been a major push that Edmiston is selling out and maybe Howard Berman won't carry a bill to establish a regulatory commission but, by God, we don't want anything that's associated with this Commission. Even though [Kathy] was the vice chair of the Commission.

When I say anything associated with the Commission, that's too much. But [I think their thinking was], we don't want anything associated with this recommendation that's coming out and create this special commission for the Santa Monica Mountains, because that's going to be too influenced by Edmiston, too influenced by the developers. The best way of doing it is if we put it in with the Coastal Conservancy, because they're tied in with the Coastal Commission, who of course is environmentally saintly. That's the best way of doing it. And they had had some discussion with Joe Petrillo, who at that time was executive officer of the Coastal Conservancy who said, "Yes, that's fine, that's what we ought to do, and we'll do that."

They had a little problem because the Coastal Conservancy was tied to the Coastal Zone and there was no sense of increasing the Coastal Zone, although they thought about that idea but that was politically impossible to expand the Coastal Zone. Bills were trying to pull it down. And there was a whole area east of the San Diego Freeway that bore no relationship really to the coast. They kind of admitted that, Well, yes, we'll have to cut the jurisdiction back. It will only cover a portion of the Santa

Monica Mountains. I thought that's the death knell to it anyway, because nobody will really agree to that.

When it came time to go forward and schedule which bill was going to be scheduled, there was a meeting and I was busy pushing the Plan. We had tight deadlines for the Plan. And I got politically blind-sided. The meeting was held, and Kathy Gordon, Nita Rosenfeld, Margot Feuer, and maybe Jill Swift was at that meeting. In fact, I believe that she was. These people represented folks who had been working on this issue for 10 or 15 years. I don't think Sue Nelson was part of that meeting. She may have been, but she was pretty much of a pox on all of the houses at that point. I don't think she was at that meeting. And Howard Berman said, "I'm going with the Coastal Conservancy approach. I did say we couldn't do the regulatory thing, but the constituency really wants something that's a lot more green that this. And even though I set up the Commission and all, I am going with this approach, because this is what the constituency wants." That meeting was held on a Friday, no excuse me that was [on Thursday].

End of Tape 1, Side B

Beginning of Tape 2, Side A

PITT: Joe, please continue.

EDMISTON: So the meeting was on a Thursday. I went back to Los Angeles, and over that day and over the weekend organized everyone such as the homeowner's associations and environmentalists who were concerned with the eastern Santa Monica Mountains who lost under that scenario. Basically it was the folks who were interested in eastern projects or in the conservation north of the 101 Freeway, and really adjacent to the 101 Freeway. The heart of the mountains was still in the Coastal Zone, so that was "protected" under the Berman bill. But there were many areas that were not protected, especially the areas within the city of Los Angeles because many of those areas and virtually everything east of the San Diego Freeway, and a good portion west of the San Diego Freeway, couldn't arguably be within a coastal influence. Therefore, even if you jimmied around with the Coastal Commission jurisdiction, at that point it wasn't viewed as making a lot of sense.

A lot of our support has always come from east of the San Diego Freeway because these are the folks who appreciate protecting a 100 acres here, 50 acres here, and because the city of Los Angeles was pretty heavily invested. This is where Anton Calleia comes in. I went to Anton and said, "Anton, we really need the Mayor's help in this." And Bradley said, "No, we don't want any sort of implementation mechanism that leaves out the great bulk of the Santa Monica Mountains in the city of Los Angeles." Thousand Oaks also would have been cut out, so that was a pretty active three days for me.

Suffice it to say that Monday afternoon Howard Berman said, "Okay, I've already put in the bill." There were two bills--AB1512 and AB1513. [The latter], 1513, was the bill supported by the Comprehensive Planning Commission, which he did not put in. He

put in AB1512, which was the Coastal Conservancy bill. “But, [Berman said], “I’m going to amend 1512 back to the way that the Comprehensive Planning Commission had voted, with some modifications, but essentially the draft that we have put forward.” And I said “Okay.” He said at the time, “I don’t need Tom Bradley telling me what’s best for the Santa Monica Mountains. And I really object to the fact that this political pressure has been put on me.” Over the weekend I mobilized Tom Bradley, with Anton’s help, to support the AB 1513 approach, the one that included the eastern portion of the mountains in Los Angeles city. Berman was miffed but not all that much.

PITT: And yet he was going in that direction.

EDMISTON: Yes. So Howard Berman was mad at me for a week, but the bill was changed. That again absolutely infuriated the Margot [Feuers], the Jill Swifts, the Kathy Gordons. They viewed the political structure of the city as being basically pro-development anyway. And here [they felt] “Joe had pulled political strings.” And besides--and this was a view not necessarily shared by all of the people, certainly not by Nita Rosenfeld, but to a lot of people like Margot Feuer--the areas in the city of Los Angeles and the areas in the more eastern part of the Santa Monica Mountains and the areas north of the 101 Freeway and the areas in Thousand Oaks, really environmentally speaking, didn’t add up to a hill of beans anyway. They probably would agree to that statement now, that the center core of the mountains is what they wanted to protect, and that center core of the mountains would be best protected by the Coastal Conservancy and we don’t care about the rest.

The fact is that our coalition has always been very diverse, has always been [based on] the idea that if you include more you are stronger. Rather than cut out the fringes to have a strong core, the fringes bring in more political support for the core. Because when you look right down the core of the Santa Monica Mountains very few people live there. Most of the people that own land in the affected area want to develop it, or are in Malibu and basically [say], We want to close it off and we don’t really care about anybody else but ourselves. If you just look within the center of the Santa Monica Mountains at that time--you did not have the city of Calabasas, you did not have the city of Agoura Hills, you did not have the city of Malibu--it was all unincorporated, and was essentially represented by pro-development supervisors. You needed the other areas to provide a political counterweight.

The bill then went forward with very strong support from most of the commissioners, lukewarm support, and sometimes opposition, from fringe environmental groups, and <u>immense</u> opposition from the developers. Now I don’t know what a regulatory bill would have brought out--probably the same or more [reaction]. For most of that year I don’t know what more they could have done to try to kill us. And Howard was surprised at the extent of the opposition. There was no appropriation made the first year, so the landowners [affected by] the federal government were very concerned, as well. Because SMMNRA didn’t get a first year land acquisition appropriation, they feared that SMMC would be another level of official objection to development, but without the wherewithal to do anything about it, i.e., buy the land. You had this new process set up, this new National Recreation Area. No appropriation for it, but a lot of concern that they were going to be, in effect, down-zoned, because they were within the

greenline of the recreation area, and then this bill in Sacramento, and who knew what was going on.

My interesting personal dilemma was that the developers said, "Oh, there's that Sierra Club lobbyist who took over the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission." And then some of the Sierra Club--oh, I won't say so much Sierra Club--but people like Margot Feuer and others, who had been very active on the extreme green side of things were saying, "Oh yes, that turncoat, that political guy who would sell out the Santa Monica Mountains just to pass the bill." So [I was] caught in between.

I've heard it said, if people are equally mad at you, then you must be doing the right thing. Well, when people are equally mad at you, it makes your life hell. And I'm not sure that that's necessarily the test of doing the right thing. I think the test of doing the right thing is if the broad middle supports it, then politically in this country, that's probably a pretty good indication. But the broad middle was never engaged in this. This was interest groups, [these were] people who saw some either gain or detriment to what was going on.

Howard at this time was probably the second most powerful member of the Legislature, after the Speaker Leo McCarthy. And this was before the spring of 1980, when the big rift came between McCarthy and Berman.

How do I put this? Howard Berman basically just pushed that bill through. I spent at least 50 percent of my time in Sacramento, and we came to the time again when we were in front of the Senate Finance Committee, and it looked like we were not going to get that bill through.

PITT: For how long? Weeks?

EDMISTON: This was toward the end of the legislative session. There were all these deadlines. The bill had to get out of that committee within a certain deadline, or else it couldn't be considered. And during the Comprehensive Planning Commission process, we had a representative from Los Angeles County, and that was Supervisor Baxter Ward. He attended only one meeting, though, about half of one meeting, and had never been involved. Los Angeles County had always kind of looked at this process askance. A lot of our recommendations could be read and were criticisms of the county plan. The county was doing a modification of the plan at the same time we were going ahead. The modification was better than before, but there was still the whole issue of taking away the county's discretion, and they didn't like that.

Baxter Ward was kind of an interesting guy. He was a broadcaster for many, many years and had some peculiar ideas. Kind of saw conspiracy under every rock, and that's great when you're a broadcaster because you can say, "Channel 5 has just discovered the following." When you are a supervisor you have a little bit more responsibility. So he was not as powerful among the supervisors as he could be. He had beaten Warren Dorn, who was absolutely pro-development, yet he wasn't really an environmentalist, and not really anti-development, either. He was just kind of quirky in the sense that he couldn't be counted on, but not counted on as an enviro either. He just couldn't be counted on, one way or another.

And his staffer, Bob [Pratt ?] had been following the process and had been attending commission meetings, although he couldn't vote, and was up there [in Sacramento]. We had taken the bill off of the calendar in the Finance Committee because we didn't have the votes, and again it was a situation of [not knowing] where the votes [were]. It was the last day to be heard, so it had to be back on the calendar. And at the end of it was a nighttime hearing and they had many, many bills. We just didn't know where the votes were going to be. I remember him saying outside in the corridor, "You know it's just terrible, with all of this energy and effort to have it end up for naught."

PITT: The "him" being Baxter Ward's guy?

EDMISTON: No, Bob Pratt. The deputy that was assigned to deal with us was Bob Pratt. And then he left the conversation. We took the bill up because we had no choice, it was the last day and, lo and behold, it passed by one vote. Now what he had done, I later found out, was to represent, wholly without authority, that Los Angeles County had changed its mind and had supported the bill. Now, he did so within a limited enough number of legislators, and he was very adroit in doing it. They were Northern California legislators. I remember one of them was [Robert] Holmdahl who was a local government guy, and whatever local government wanted, that's what he wanted. But he wasn't really tied in enough to realize [what] somebody from Los Angeles County would have realized, Well, wait a minute. I've got to check this out. [laughter]

PITT: Why do you think he did it?

EDMISTON: Just for exactly what he said. That this whole process, everything that has gone on, shouldn't come to naught. I think he was absolutely sincere about that. And again, there had been many of these cases where people have gone out of their way. Little incidents like that have made incredible effects, and yet it's not something you can really trumpet. He's passed away now, and I think Baxter Ward has passed away, too. And I don't know if the county lobbyist will ever read this. He's probably passed away, too. So the bill passed.

Now let's go on to the federal interaction, if we can. [But first] let me just go over what the main constituents of that bill are. The bill, by implication, adopts the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan as the overall planning document. It authorizes everything we need to do to interface with the federal government, with the National Parks and Recreation Act, and the Santa Monica Mountains legislation. It set up a very well-balanced governing board, where no election could overturn a majority of the board members, so every four years we didn't have to worry that it would go from pro-environment to anti. It was a very well-balanced board. It made the governor the appointing authority for the Conservancy's executive director, which was a little strange, but it was also put in there, frankly, because I wanted that. I knew that there was that relationship there that I could count on. And I clearly wanted to be the head of the new Conservancy, and saw that as really a mission to implement that plan. So the bill passes, I was ecstatic. We knew that it was going to be signed by the governor. I drove from Sacramento to Berkeley to see my girlfriend. We went out for a wonderful night at the

Claremont Hotel, had a fancy dinner, walked out of the Claremont Hotel, and was promptly robbed at gun-point in the parking lot.

PITT: No!

EDMISTON: [laughter] Yes! My girlfriend jumped into the car and I was standing outside and she was leaning on the horn and the guy had the gun right at my ribs, saying, "Tell her to open the door and give me the purse!" She didn't give up her purse and I didn't tell her to, but I gave up my wallet. [I was] $200 poorer. So that was a memorable day, a day that will live in infamy. So I need now to take ten minutes.

PITT: A little break. A good point to do that.

[Recorder is turned off for several minutes]

PITT: All right, we have resumed. Please continue, Joe.

EDMISTON: I'd like to talk about the interface between the work of the Comprehensive Planning Commission and my work, the establishment of the National Recreation Area, and the early years of the National Recreation Area.

Of course, as the Comprehensive Planning Commission started its work we were very much aware of the work of the Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains [and] Sue Nelson. There was some initial antipathy. I think Sue thought that any state efforts would in some way detract from the push to have a major national park. As the bills developed, there were two approaches taken. One is the Republican/Carter administration approach. And I see your eyebrows furrowing, and I will explain that. And the other is the [Rep. Anthony] Beilenson, and then what became [the] Burton, approach.

The earliest time I became aware of a push for a national park [was when] there had been some discussion back when Alphonzo Bell was in Congress. And Congressman [Charles] Teague--[who] because of gerrymandering had basically all of the California coast from Monterey Bay on down, including a portion of the Santa Monica Mountains--introduced a bill for the Toyon National Park, which I still think would have been a better name, frankly, emphasizing the natural characteristic plant of the Santa Monica Mountains ecosystem. In 1977 and early '78 it became clear that there was pressure for this Omnibus National Parks and Recreation Act, [that] there was a lot of pressure on Congress to address this tremendous backlog of needs nationally. And there was increasing public awareness of what was going on in the Santa Monica Mountains, and [for] the need to protect the Santa Monica Mountains, which the Berman legislation was part and parcel of. But of course it was a much larger issue than just the state Legislature and the people were supporting the Beilenson approach. There [were] the bill[s] that [Rep. Robert J.] Lagomarsino and [Rep. Barry] Goldwater [Jr. each] introduced, I believe in separate bills. Those bills basically used the greenline approach. It then had a lot of support in the administration as well as in Congress, which was that, as one of the deputy assistant secretaries in the Carter Administration said: We can't buy back America so we have to regulate, and users of land and local governments have to be responsible in their actions. The federal government will then recognize and support such responsible actions

by, in some cases, planning grants to implement these plans that would meet certain national standards. There was a conference on green-line national parks that the Library Congress put on in ’77, and this was the hot kind of topic. One of the big supporters of it was the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. Chris Delaporte was the head of that. He was the designated administration spokesperson on the Burton bill.

Now, if you’ve heard this from other sources stop me. The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, the old Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, has now been folded into the National Park Service. [Ray] Murray used to work for HCRS. It principally dealt with administering the grants under the Land and Water Conservation Program, dealt with local governments, local assistance, that kind of thing. And they said, In many of these cases we don’t want to establish National Parks, Mr. Burton. We really want to see national scenic areas, these greenline park designations, more local government cooperation, that sort of thing. We don’t think you should go the full National Park Service route. And the National Park Service in many cases thought internally some of these areas weren’t really of National Park status anyway, and in those that they did they had a sock stuffed in their mouth. Of course, what Phil Burton said was, Thank you Mr. Delaporte. I don’t know if the chronology is exact, but this is what happened. If it was not in the same hearing, it was very close. Essentially he said, Thank you Mr. Delaporte By the way, the new, amended version of the bill does away with some of the bureaucratic problems that we’ve had and streamlines government. Yes, well that portion of the bill cut off the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. So Chris Delaporte had to back-peddle and then go and get administration support for the Burton version of the bill in order to save his job, and Burton said, “Okay you deliver the administration for me on my bill and I’ll put you back in.”

As this was all going on, there were these two versions relating to the Santa Monica Mountains: the “greenline,” which the Republicans were taking, and the one that the Office of Management and Budget was supporting. That played very well into the Comprehensive Planning Commission approach because we were already [working on] a comprehensive plan for the area. The idea was that we would have this plan to [meet] federal standards approved by the Secretary of the Interior. This money would [then] come to the state and the Lagomarsino and Goldwater bills [would have] $30 million then for grants to buy land in furtherance of the plan, and do other things, such as buy-down infrastructure bonds, if necessary.

What happened when Burton held his hearings? I forget the exact date of these local hearings. He was here for several days, took a field trip. [The hearing] was held in the Santa Monica Library. I remember it was rather dramatic when Tom Bradley came in to testify--a tall handsome, dignified individual--all eyes looked over to him. He gave some extremely good testimony.

But during that time it was clear that Burton was really leading the show on this, and although it was Beilenson’s bill that they were using as the template, Burton wanted to have bipartisan support. And what happened was that Burton simply grafted, virtually identically, the two bills--the Republican approach, and the Beilenson approach--and put them into the same bill. And if you look at the National Recreation Act, Section 507, it starts out and it has all these things about what Congress is going to do establishing the National Recreation Area. Then it has a whole separate section, Subsection (n) that talks about this grant program to the states, and how they would have to have a plan that does

all these things as a comprehensive plan. In that way he was able to get Republican support. Because he said to the lead Republican on the subcommittee, "Okay, I'll do your plan and I'll do Mr. Beilenson's plan. You can't object to your plan, can you?" Lagomarsino said, "Well, of course not." "Well then how can you object to Mr. Beilenson's plan? Put them all together."

PITT: That was Burton?

EDMISTON: That was Burton. And so the $125 million that Beilenson had in his bill got increased to $155 million, with the addition of that $30 million increment which was to go to grants, pursuant to this plan. And so Gail Osherenko and I worked very closely together in drafting, putting all the language together, and working with Lagomarsino's staff. Less so with Goldwater's staff, although Ben Key, who worked for Goldwater was a very supportive individual. He was his local political guy here. It was principally the minority staff and Lagomarsino's personal staff that put this together.

And I remember a defining point, when it came time for [approving] the map. This is another example of [how] Burton [worked]. I don't know if I described this to you in our previous interview, how the map got developed? Everybody had their own map. The Comprehensive Planning Commission had a map of what the important resources were. The National Park Service had put together a map of what they viewed as being important resources, and the Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains had put together a map. Sue Nelson had a map. Each of these maps were overlays and tissue-paper overlays. And Burton had a hideaway office; I forget whether it was in the Longworth or Cannon--I confuse those two office buildings. It was a hideaway office and there was this very small office [with a] big marble corridor outside. The maps were too big for his little office, so we went out into the corridor and spread the maps out. One National Park Service and then Sue Nelson's. [Burton] looked at them all and everyone started to argue about which was better, and he told the National Park Service staff persons, "Put them all together." "What do you mean?" [they asked]. "Lay them on top of each other." They were all transparent because they were over a USGS [United State Geological Service] base map. So they were all together. And he said, "Okay, draw the outer boundary of all of them." And then we started to tense up, and he say the same thing. "Now you can't object because you got yours in there, and you can't object because you got yours in there." And then he instructed the National Park Service to draw up that map. And that represented the NPS #155--or whatever map it was.

PITT: How do you know that? Were you there?

EDMISTON: I was there.

PITT: You were there. You saw it.

EDMISTON: I saw it with my own eyes. I was the guy that had the Comprehensive Planning Commission's map. Our job in this sort of lobbying task was to bring the administration around to this approach. And you had Chris Delaporte who now was in general support of it, but you still had the problem that the assistant secretary [of the

Interior] and the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] were still thinking that the Pine Lands approach [would be right]. Are you familiar with the Pine Lands legislation?

PITT: No.

EDMISTON: Which, by the way, was implemented in its sort of classic greenline park approach. They still thought that that would apply to the Santa Monica Mountains. Because there were so many existing State Parks facilities, they thought this really should be a state and local responsibility. And it was our job [to unify the various factions.] Burton said, "Okay, we're going to put all these things together. There's going to be this role for this continuing planning process for the Planning Commission, or whatever successor entity the state Legislature works on. But you have to then bring the administration along on this."

And Elliot Cutler from the OMB came out [to Los Angeles]. There was an interesting thing. He was an attorney that we actually dealt with. We met him at Malibu Creek State Park, and when he came in [I noticed] he had city of Los Angeles cufflinks on. I remarked, "How did you get these city of L.A. cufflinks?" and he told me this story. He came in by helicopter, of course, all very important, and he was going to determine the fate of the Santa Monica Mountains. He had met with Bradley, and he had unfortunately forgotten his cufflinks, so he had come into this meeting with Bradley [wearing] paper clips on his French cuffs and Bradley had not said anything during the interview. Of course, [the mayor] was very supportive. We had worked all that out with Anton Calleia, who played a major role in making sure that Bradley was at the right place at the right time in putting it politically forward. At the end of the interview Bradley came in with mayoral cufflinks and said, "By the way I noticed that you might need these," and handed them to him. So that's why he had these city of L.A. cufflinks.

The OMB people were, shall I say, somewhat less than persuaded and our job was to try to convince them that this could be done within the $125 to $155 million parameter. We did an extensive data base of land and categorized land, and what we thought the acquisition prices would be based on assessor's information. We then used the results of our economic study to factor that in, as to what the relationship is between the assessor's assessed value and real market value. We had several hundred test cases that we used, and on the basis of that we were able to adjust the assessor's market data closer to true market value. We probably would have been within 20 percent--which is not good by private sector standards but by government standards was pretty darn good--if the appropriations had come in within the five-year cycle that we had anticipated, and was called for in the bill.

PITT: For a total of $155 million?

EDMISTON: Right. There was a staggered authorization over a five year period, the authorizations to be cumulative. Of course, it never happened that way, and it got dragged out and you had inflationary pressures, which again is one of the tragedies of the whole thing. But at the time it was a pretty good analytical document. I remember we went back and there was a guy at OMB whose last name was Graybeard, and of course he had a gray beard. And he was a pretty tough old curmudgeon. This was in the Old

Executive Office Building with incredible security around there because it turned out that his office was close to the office that the plumbers used [in the Nixon Watergate scandal]. There were all kinds of national security implications. We found out later on where this guy was, and we had all of our documents and our information, and had him grudgingly say, "I don't believe it [the budget estimation], but I can't disprove it."

And I don't think the book, *A Rage for Justice*,[7] even does the Burton approach justice. And subsequently, I think people remember that it was Tony Beilenson's legislation. I don't think they remember how it was packaged together in the whole Burton Omnibus [Park Bill] piece, and the role of that, and the role of bipartisanship, because Burton was rigorously bipartisan in this. And that's really what put it over the top.

And also there was discussion with the Park Service, because the Park Service was not totally on board. There were some people who were saying, Yes, it's a great thing. We really want to do this for Burton because we get so many other benefits. Other people within the Park Service were saying, Really, this is not the traditional mandate of the Park Service at all, but with this tremendous expansion in the Burton bill, we're going to be getting, you know, the chaff along with the wheat. Can't there be a further winnowing process? We were caught up in this because the Santa Monica Mountains is either your quintessential example of where the Park Service should be in the future, or quintessential example of where the Park Service was forced to be by politics and shouldn't be, on the merits. And it just depends on your view of these things.

I'll give you just a little vignette about the day when the bill passed. It was on the Senate floor, and I got my pass to see the Senate. There was [Sen. S. I.] Hayakawa. There were some efforts to try to derail it because it was a $1.2 billion authorization in the days when $1.2 billion was a big deal. I forget which senator said, I can't stop this bill. There's something in it for everybody, but this is an example of just the worst possible type of legislation. And it struck me that when you said, "in a democracy there's something in it for everybody," that that was not the example of the worst possible type of legislation. That's how you got things done. And I think that all but 23 congressional districts--some incredible number and I won't go into the history of that Omnibus [Park] Bill here--but some incredible number of congressional districts were covered by this. And, of course, there is a whole history of how [Burton] used that process to get back into power. This is on the Recreation Area and not necessarily on Burton. It was a classic of how he had done this, working with Lagomarsino.

The bill passed. As soon as it was clear that the roll call was going our way I went down from the gallery, down as close as I could get, which was the cloakroom, to the actual floor. Burton was there with his staff, and I kind of blended in with the staff and so got to go along with this coterie where outside people weren't really supposed to be. I guess I looked like a young haggard staff member. [laughter] [Which was] true. And [Sen. Alan] Cranston comes out and Cranston had a great deal of personal dignity. He was very tall, always pretty well dressed, and here's Burton who is slobbering drunk, always disheveled. Cranston was a foot-and-a-half taller than Burton. Here's Burton [saying], "Alan you made it happen," and embracing him in a bear hug and with red eyes.

[7] *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phil Burton* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

And Cranston--I remember this moment--was just frozen, and he didn't know how to react. It was, "Thank you, but . . ."

Burton was just visibly drunk, he was just visibly drunk. I had heard stories about it, and before that same trip back to Washington when I rolled out the various maps at the meeting that I told you about, he called me into his office, that same office. He had one of these old leather couches that proliferate in Washington. You sit down and your knees immediately come up to your chin. Very uncomfortable. It looked great but when you sat down in it, it was from the 1930s or something. He poured Stolichnaya and this is the time when Stoli was a little bit, you know. It was Russian, when it fit in with his liberal San Francisco image, oh yes, he had to be drinking Russian vodka. He poured the Stoli and handed it to me and I said--this was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon--and I said, "No thanks." And he said, "Have a drink!" "No thanks." "Have a drink!" [laughter] Here's this guy leaning over me, and I'm here with my knees up to my chest [and he's insisting], "Have a drink!"

I can remember the Stoli dripping down, burning its way down my esophagus and slushing. [And then he's saying,] "So where are you on this bill? Are you for me or against me?" "Yes, we're for the bill" I forget all of the details, but the "Have a drink!" is what struck me. So I already knew about that, and of course the stories were abounding. Only somebody with that kind of a gigantic personality could have done it. On the other hand, he had gigantic character defects, in the sense that probably half the time these amendments were being added into the bill, he legally couldn't drive a car.

PITT: It was vintage Phil Burton.

EDMISTON: Vintage Phil Burton and vintage politics that we really don't have today. It's been cleaned up to the point where we now think about process. Although I hear that there are some tapes now--the [Matt] Drudge Report says there are [Newt] Gingrich tapes, so maybe, who knows, but I won't get into that. So the last night he goes back to his cubby office and says, "I want to celebrate." I'm thinking he's been celebrating all night.

PITT: This is before the Senate?

EDMISTON: No, no, this is after the Senate. We've had the bear hug out in the cloak room. Cranston comes out. Immediately outside the doors he gets the bear hug by Burton. I'm there with the coterie of staff. And Cranston excuses himself after this faintly embarrassing situation. Burton says, "I'm going to go back to my office." He gets back to the office and says, "I want to celebrate." As I said, I thought he had been celebrating all night. But he wanted to celebrate. So the staff was all around him, including the Republican staff, and this was midnight to one o'clock--it was way late. And he says, "Bob ought to be here." So he calls Lagomarsino up at home and says, "Bob, it passed, and couldn't have done it without you, and, God, you need to be here. Yep, you need to be here." So his staff person, Scott [Stevens?] left and went and picked up Lagomarsino and maybe half an hour, 45 minutes later, Lago is there. It's probably around one o'clock now. And here's Lagomarsino in a very well-pressed Madras shirt and slacks and of course his close cropped hair. You've interviewed him. You know he's a well put

together individual. And he's there sipping. I forget whether he actually drank or not. He probably did there. And here's Burton, who is just three sheets to the wind, eyes red, the classic inebriated guy, and there they are, and they're relating. He's complimenting, "No, Phil, you did this right." It was this . . .

PITT: Love fest?

EDMISTON: Yes. It was an example of how things got done. Again, it gets down to this whole issue of personality, that some things transcend mere politics. They go to people reaching a political combination with each other. And seeing that there, I think the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area would not have happened but for that kind of accommodation. And yet people fail to realize that that kind of human accommodation is an absolutely necessary part. That you cannot govern, you cannot make public policy, you cannot advance the case strictly on the basis of the way I used to lobby, you know, that assemblyman Keysor, with "just the facts." And that human dimension is one of the reasons that Tony Beilenson was so successful. He was personally so well respected. And Phil Burton reaching out to very unlikely people such as Lagomarsino.

PITT: Now was the Carter White House a little leery of this, as Jacobs says?

EDMISTON: Yes. They ultimately went along with it for all the political reasons that I discussed, but they were extremely leery.

PITT: And there was something about giving them Chattahoochee in exchange for Santa Monica.

EDMISTON: You know that was said afterwards. I don't really think it happened that way.

PITT: Really.

EDMISTON: I think that once Burton had made his accommodation with Lagomarsino and put both of those things in, then it was important to Lagomarsino, and he was the ranking minority member of the committee.

PITT: By then it was a done deal?

EDMISTON: Well, again, they wanted to have the administration's support, but I don't think it was [so much] a question of the quid pro quo . . .

End of Tape 2, Side A

Beginning of Tape 2, Side B

EDMISTON: . . . I don't think it was as much a quid pro quo as that [Burton] certainly did not object to making the bill bigger if it got supporters. But I don't think that the Santa Monicas was in jeopardy once that agreement had been made to put the whole thing together the way it was.

He [Burton] always suspected that Beilenson had cast the one vote against him so that he would not be majority leader. Even though Beilenson has said he didn't, he suspected Beilenson. [He made a comment] in the bar of what was then the Sheraton Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica when he had his field hearings. I don't know if it was a late night session, but he was sufficiently drunk that it should have been a late night session, but it was an evening in there, and he made a comment that "I put this in. This shows what kind of guy I am. I put this in, even though Beilenson voted against me."

PITT: Beilenson has denied it to me, and others who point to his honesty say, We have to believe Tony Beilenson.

EDMISTON: Correct. I'm not taking sides in that. I was not there. I'm just telling you what I heard from Burton. Burton also showed a personal interest, because he and Sala had their honeymoon in Santa Monica, and they stayed at a place that used to be a hotel, but was then a restaurant called the Belle View. It's now something like the Crocodile, or some God-awful thing. I tend to believe that this Santa Monica Mountains portion of the bill had kind of a special place in Burton's heart. He certainly spent an awful lot of personal time on it.

PITT: On this particular phase of all the different phases that he had in that bill?

EDMISTON: Again, he was a prodigious worker, so I didn't see what was going on in other phases of the bill, so I can't really say that this was more, but when he was focused on this he was intensely focused on it. So that's the answer to your quid pro quo question.

I don't know what your time situation is, whether this would be a good time to stop.

PITT: I think this might be a good time. You had wanted to talk next--I'll remember this by saying it--you wanted to talk next about the interface between the Conservancy and the National Park Service, at least in the first couple of years, or first year.

EDMISTON: Right.

PITT: And we have agreed to continue this, but not this evening. Very good.

Tape 2, Side B (continued)

PITT: It's Monday, September 27, 1999. This is the second taping session [of] Leonard Pitt interviewing Joe Edmiston. It's 4:15 at the Los Angeles River Center, a new facility. We're picking up the story, Joe, of you and the Conservancy in 1978, and we'll bring it up to 1980, [being] particularly interested in the partnership between the Conservancy and the NRA [National Recreation Area] at the outset of both these organizations. Recalling now that the last thing you talked about was [when] you went to Washington to work with Phil Burton on the NRA legislation. We know that in November the Congress passed it, the president signed it, and then the spotlight shifted back to Los Angeles. On January 1st, Robert Chandler comes to Los Angeles as the first superintendent of the National Recreation Area. [In] the beginning of 1980 Jerry Brown appoints you as director of the Conservancy and the first meeting is in May of 1980. I'm telling you things you already know.

Let me ask you this question and you take it from there. Start with your appointment, please. Governor Jerry Brown appoints you to become the executive director of the Conservancy and the first meeting is in May.

EDMISTON: I'm not sure it was May. I think it was March, 1980.

PITT: March. Okay.

EDMISTON: But we can check that.

PITT: Those things can be verified later on. How did you come to be appointed?

EDMISTON: Let's take it back to '78. Immediately after the bill was signed, a director, William Whalen, who was then director of the Park Service, held a reception here for Bob Chandler and it was pretty much a victory reception. A lot of us found some irony in that because we all knew that there had been mixed reception to the Santa Monica Mountains joining the Park Service family. But Whalen, who was quite a promoter, made the point of saying, "We love all of our children equally." So there was a reception and we were introduced to Bob Chandler, and it was indicated that he was the favorite person [to head the SMMNRA], although there was an official period where, I guess, it had to be advertised or something, but it was pretty clear that Whalen wanted Chandler. That caused some degree of concern, because while this was an urban area, he was coming from the Jefferson Expansion National Memorial, which is otherwise known as the St. Louis Arch, which basically is a plot of land next to the Mississippi River with a big concrete arch on it, but nothing else. There's no nature anywhere close to it. So there was a concern as to whether this park was going to be administered more in that vein or more in the natural protection vein. And, of course, that shouldn't have been a concern because Bob Chandler went on to become superintendent of some of the really big-sky parks--Olympics, Everglades--and that was not an issue. But that was the first kind of concern as to whether this new person would be looking more at the model of concrete or the more natural big-sky park model.

There was an initial period there when we were developing the final parts of the Comprehensive Plan in 1979 when there was some real competition as to what the first acquisition should be. And we at the Comprehensive Planning Commission had

developed a preliminary acquisition list in early 1979. We had been doing a lot of the work and the studies, and frankly we thought we knew best, and there was some tension about what would be the first properties. There were a number of people who were saying, Start buying in the eastern end of the mountains because that's where the most development pressure is. Others were saying, No, you have to buy in the center of the mountains, and they chose a fairly well-balanced program that involved acquisition of the Doheny property in Franklin Canyon, acquisition of the Paramount Ranch property in the center of the mountains--it's a free-standing property at Cornell and Mulholland--and then property in the extreme western end which was Rancho Sierra Vista, at that time known as the Danielson Ranch.

We had urged the two acquisitions on either end and I really forget what our position was on the Paramount. It was a good acquisition and it was one that had been approved for development and there was a lot of public support for it. But we were pretty much associated with pushing the Doheny property and pushing the Danielson Ranch property. The then mayor of Thousand Oaks--or maybe she was just a city councilwoman--but Frances Prince became the first chairperson of the Conservancy and she was an influential voice in that area to begin with. She and Ed Jones, who was a supervisor out there. Ed was the Ventura County representative on the Comprehensive Planning Commission. But Ed and Frances Prince were very aggressively pushing the Danielson Ranch. So there was a period there when I think that the Park Service kind of felt that, Gee, we need to independently establish what the acquisition priorities are, we're not just going to take what somebody else hands us, even though it turns out there was a great deal of agreement ultimately on the lists. So there started out to be some degree of--I won't say antagonism--but both the National Park Service and ourselves were sort of walking around each other, sort of sizing each other up. Then when they started to make their acquisitions--there was a period of about a year-and-a-half when they were extremely aggressive in lining up the acquisitions. They made them starting with the calendar year '79, and there was that six month period where they made some of the most significant acquisitions in the mountains.

So we're now up to the beginning of 1980. They are making these acquisitions. We have gone around in compliance with Section 507 of the National Park and Recreation Act which was the statute that enacted the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Subdivision (n) of that statute talked about the adoption of a comprehensive plan that would have to have local government buy-in if they were going to implement that plan. So we spent the latter half of 1979--really from August 1979 to January of 1980--getting the local governments to do the buy-in and basically lobbying the National Park Service on the acquisitions they should make. So now we're at January of 1980. I thought that I was probably the most likely candidate. There were a few other candidates. Obviously there were some folks who objected to my being appointed. I know that Margot Feuer objected. I don't know of anybody else but I can imagine there was a segment. The grounds were that the Comprehensive Plan was not as aggressive as they had wanted to see it.

PITT: That was their reason?

EDMISTON: At least that was the reason they gave. The final Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in August of 1979, had two minority reports to it. A minority report written by June Glenn who was the conservative I talked to you about. She was a very conservative landowner advocate on the Comprehensive Planning Commission. She wrote a minority report largely based on a document produced by the building industry association claiming all these adverse economic effects if development was restricted in the Santa Monica Mountains and if land was taken off the tax rolls and put into parks. And then there was another minority report by Kathleen Gordon, the vice chair, and Nita Rosenfeld, that said that the plan was not aggressive enough. So we were bracketed between the building industry association and the extreme environmental community. That, we felt, was pretty much where we wanted to be.

I will tell you now, that I think that in many cases we were not aggressive enough --that is, in the land acquisition program. We identified a skeletal land acquisition program not as large as ultimately the Park Service would. There is virtually no property on the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan list that's not on the National Park Service list, but there's a broader section in the National Park Service list and now the Santa Monica [Mountains] Conservancy's work program, some 20 years later, is much larger than both of those documents. That reflects the difference in view between 1978 and '79 when we were making the policy decisions in the Comprehensive Plan. [Back then] we thought that regulation was going to be a more important component. As we moved along with the Conservancy, we found that it was easier to solve problems literally by writing a check and buying the land than by trying to persuade government entities to do the right thing in terms of their consideration of development projects. I think had we realized--and I want to say this--the comparative ease of getting money--we would have written the Plan somewhat differently, with a view toward a more expansive land acquisition program. But at that time it looked like it was going to be very difficult to get the amount of money. Had somebody said back then, Joe, the Conservancy in 20 years will have spent about $250 million buying land maybe worth $325 million, I would have said, Boy, you're smoking something that must be real good that takes you out into fantasy world.

I think that had we had that perspective we would have said, Forget some of these regulatory land use battles. Let's go ahead and simply buy the land. I'll give you an example of this. One of the more controversial questions was, How to deal with the spray-field question from the Tapia Sewage Treatment Plant. Tapia was under a restriction from discharging into Malibu Creek, and so they had to spray the treated effluent. Tapia is a tertiary, in fact it was the first tertiary plant in the country. They needed large areas for spray fields. So one of the policies in the Comprehensive Plan said that enough land should be set aside solely for the purpose of these spray fields so as not to discharge this water into Malibu Creek. As it turned out, the regulatory entities let them discharge into Malibu Creek. That whole issue became this giant political issue: Either the remaining property [should be] acquired that [was] used for spray fields, or they didn't need spray fields because they could simply turn on the pipe in Malibu Creek. So that was a huge controversy about the land uses in the Las Virgenes Valley that ultimately became a non-issue.

Some of those kinds of things where we thought the direction was going to be one way, it turned out that the direction was in an entirely different way, based on a whole

different set of arguments. At that point Fish and Game was arguing, just to give you an example of this, Yes, it would be great if we had a continuous flow into Malibu Creek [and] in that way we could have continuous habitat and what had been a largely ephemeral stream, Malibu Creek, now is a full time stream. Now it has also had the effect that it has increased the nutrient load because of the natural nutrients that it brings down from that whole watershed, plus the nutrients that are left in the treated effluent, so that now there's an algae bloom problem and all kinds of other problems associated with the Tapia discharge. That was exactly the kind of thing that we were trying to avoid and so now the community in Malibu is trying to eliminate that discharge and go back to the idea of providing enough spray fields. It comes around in a cycle. But those are the sorts of things we did not look deeply enough into in terms of developing the Comprehensive Plan. Our focus has changed since then. I don't want to digress from that, but those are important things that guided some of our acquisition recommendations.

We argued very strenuously before the National Park Service that they should spend a good deal of their money, that first chunk of money, buying what was then called Sampo Farms**.** It's now the Malibu Meadows, the Lincoln Malibu Meadows Project, about 1,500 units. Sampo Farms was owned by Bob Hope and he wanted $13 million for it. It was ultimately developed by a company called Curry-Reich and it's everything that is between the intersection of basically from the entrance to Las Virgenes [Road]--it's where Lost Hills comes into Las Virgenes--everything north of that to Agoura Road. That would have been a wonderful entranceway into the National Recreation Area. The plan had been that it would all have been essentially irrigated so that it would be green fields, not manicured lawn, but irrigated alfalfa fields or whatever it was. That would have been an incredibly pastoral cool, beautiful entryway into the park that we all envisioned as being that the Las Virgenes Road would be the central entranceway off the 101 freeway. We lost that battle. When I say we lost it, the National Park Service said there are other higher priorities for making that acquisition. But that's the reason--because of the spray-field issue--that we made such a large point about it. That reverberated within the Park Service because they were saying, Well, see here, you're making the recommendations based on larger planning issues and what we're really doing is dealing with a National Recreation Area. We're not going to let our acquisition priorities basically implement the Comprehensive Plan. You do that. You get the money to do that. We're going to do things which make sense from . . .

PITT: "You" being the National Park Service?

EDMISTON: No, "you" being the SMMC. The National Park Service says to the early Conservancy, You're urging us to put our money into things which more fundamentally implement your plan than implement our vision of the national recreation area. So there was a little bit of . . .

PITT: Tension?

EDMISTON: Tension. Yes. Not friction, but tension. [It was] basically, Are we going to be implementing the kind of development restriction philosophy behind the Comprehensive Plan, or are we going to be implementing a park program which is

complementary to in most cases, but independent from the anti-development scenario, if you will.

PITT: John Reynolds was the leading land planner and management [planner] for the resources. It was he who came with Chandler and established their priorities. Chandler says that it was a problem because he didn't want people to think the feds would come in and have their way regardless of any other objections, so he also acknowledges that there was a certain tension.

Reynolds speaks of you very respectfully and he remembers his first meeting with you. He remembers coming to your office and you had a chessboard. And he said you used chess to engage people in talking about power, particularly people who may have been naive about power. He also said he noticed that you had a library of books about powerful men. He was very impressed with this. Obviously he hasn't forgotten it. Is he remembering correctly? And what's your reaction [to hearing this] 20 years later?

EDMISTON: Sure. I still have an extensive library. There's one particular book that he is referring to, called *The Power Broker* by Robert Caro, which I think is one of the best biographies certainly I've ever . . .

PITT: Robert Moses.

EDMISTON: Robert Moses [New York City public works commissioner]. There are some parallels. There are a lot of things that are not parallel, but I do like to use that as an analogy. And I like to play chess. I also like to play with people. You probably didn't notice it but there are times when developers would come in and I would pile on my desk [Karl] von Clausewitz, *On War***.** [laughter] Just to play with their minds.

PITT: I do notice you have a big photograph of Bill Mulholland, I believe the only large portrait that one sees in your office. Obviously you chose that with care.

EDMISTON: With care. Yes. I would say that [they are] two people that every day people in New York and people in Los Angeles see the benefits of what [these] visionaries of previous generations have been able to do. And I don't put myself in the Bill Mulholland category and I don't put myself in the Robert Moses category, but I do think those of us in these positions have an obligation to think as close to that kind of a large vision as we can. One can disagree with what Moses did when he started building highways, and I was recently quoted in a paper [as saying], "If we ever start to build highways, shoot me," [laughter] because I think Robert Moses was one of the most creative forces right up until the point when he was shown to be about the only force that could cut through the crap that was and is New York, and get something done. And then they said, Oh, my God, since we need highways, we need bridges, we need all of this to be done. Do it! And, of course, he had positioned himself to be right there at that center. So when he became "construction coordinator of New York" [there] literally was not a construction project in New York City that he wasn't in charge of. And it was a great turn to use the term "coordinator." Not czar or anything like that, but coordinator. But since everything had to coordinate through his office . . .

So that's the sort of thing that, I think, [that could] divert from our mission--if somebody were to call me up and say, Joe, we desperately need land for the next baseball or football stadium to be acquired and we know you can cut the deal, or something. First of all, that call would probably never occur, but if it did, I would be well advised based on history, certainly Robert Moses', to say, "No, sorry. I'm going to keep doing what we're doing." So I think there's the bright side and then there's the dark side, and we have to learn.

The same thing with Mulholland. You have Mulholland Drive. The great conception of Mulholland. You have the view of Southern California as being not simply a backwater, but in fact a premier metropolis, which is certainly what he had [as a vision]. And then you have the way Owens Valley folks were treated, although you then end up with a preserved Owens Valley. I mean, the folks there would have loved to have developed the whole thing. I knew some of them. My mother was involved and my father involved in protecting an elk that ended up in the Owens Valley. He was elderly at the time, but one of the pioneer people in developing Lone Pine was a guy named Walter Dow. I was in my early teens and he was probably 75- or 80-years-old, and I heard all these stories about how they wanted to develop this, but he happened to like these little animals. But he hated the Department of Water and Power because he owned the Ford dealership in town and the motel and this and this. And they wanted to see this big tourist development kind of thing. And the Owens Valley is protected largely because the Department of Water and Power owns every drop of water there. So you've got the good and the bad. Those are the sorts of things that people say, Oh, you look to these [projects as being] grandiose. Well grandiose, but we're also looking to them for not making the same kinds of mistakes. In both cases, if you're focused on producing the park product, [you won't be] distracted [by], Oh, what is your role in the more global scheme. I think our horizons should be unlimited in terms of quality of life, but strictly limited in terms of the subject matter. And that's the lesson I've taken from [Mulholland and Moses]. But the rest of the stuff just happens to be what I like. I mean, I love to play chess and a lot of my friends play chess. It's an interesting little diversion. But as I said, most of it was staking out territory vis-a-vis developers.

PITT: I have an idea then of the relationship that was beginning to evolve, or how you thought it should evolve at the very beginning.

EDMISTON: And so let's now take it to January of 1980. I started on this. There were some objections raised by folks, and then I talked about why they raised objections to the Plan and kind of went off on that tangent. But to bring it back. Huey Johnson was then secretary of Resources. I'd known him for a long time. He'd known me since, literally, I was 12-years-old, because my parents had done projects when Huey worked for the Nature Conservancy, and they had been leaders in the Southern California chapter of the Nature Conservancy. There was a time when I remember being extremely embarrassed because my parents would bring out my art work to show people and I remember one time they brought out a picture that I had done of the first National Park Service ranger, Harry Yount, that I had copied from Horace Albright's book, *Oh, Ranger*.[8] They brought

[8] Horace M. Albright and Frank J. Taylor, *Oh, Ranger! A Book about the National Parks* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1929), illustrated by Ruth Taylor White.

it out to show Huey and I just got so embarrassed. Early teens get embarrassed at whatever their parents do, and so I always thought that Huey looked at me as the 12- or 13-year-old who was a nuisance of these volunteers that he had to deal with. Whether or not that's true [I don't know]. But he was not supportive when he said that it appeared that the hard-core environmentalists, the Margot Feuer's and all, were against me, and that unless we had their support, the Conservancy had their support, he didn't see how it could function. Besides, they needed more diversity in the Resources Agency anyway, so he interviewed some minorities and some women.

The strongest card that I had to play was the fact that I was the head of the Comprehensive Planning Commission and had that experience and had been previously appointed by the governor, so [I] was sort of a known commodity, and the fact that the author of the bill, Howard Berman--who at that time was still the majority floor leader of the Assembly--supported me with the governor. That turned out to be the decisive thing. So I was told--I do not know this of my own knowledge--that at the very time that the resources secretary was informed of my appointment, he was in fact interviewing somebody else. I can't verify that, but that's what I was told. My relationship with [Huey Johnson] was always very rocky. He subsequently tried to get me fired, [but] was not successful.

PITT: Let me ask this: You've given us a clue about how you thought the relationship with the feds should be. What did you imagine should be the relationship with the resources secretary and especially with the State Parks and Recreation at that time?

EDMISTON: The template for all the conservancies in California is the State Coastal Conservancy. That was established in 1976. It was again a situation where it had a relationship with the [California] Resources Agency and we saw that that relationship wasn't as conducive as it should have been. So the statute was specifically written so that the Santa Monica Conservancy was not a part of the Resources agency. Initially. The compromise was that the secretary of Resources was designated as the chairperson of the Conservancy. But it was not within the line authority of a secretary. And the reason was that the ultimately successful executive officer of the State Coastal Conservancy, [Joseph] Joe Petrillo, who had done some of the same things--he was the consultant to Senator Smith who authored both the ultimately successful Coastal Act and the statute to create the State Coastal Conservancy--he was the consultant who had done all the work and it was pretty obvious that he was the right person for the job. Secretary Huey Johnson had a different view. Since he was only one vote, he did not prevail, but he used his authority in order--many people say--to over-influence what was a separate board.

[In] the governmental relationships in California--we have many multi-member boards--it's assumed that those multi-member boards have a different relationship because you can't direct somebody that's independently appointed to come to a particular conclusion. Whereas in State Parks, there's only one State Parks director, and the Parks Commission has been relegated to really quite a minor role. [It is] advisory in most cases and they pass only on such things as general plans for the parks, so they don't really run the department in any way, shape, or form. [Therefore,] the secretary of Resources can direct the director of Parks and Recreation to do X, Y, and Z. But in terms of a multi-member board, like the Coastal Conservancy or the Santa Monica or Tahoe

conservancies, you can't direct that board because they have different appointing authorities. This is the same thing with, say, the Water Resources Control Board, the Solid Waste Management Board--there are all these boards in state government the creation of which was politically determined to be more important than a line function, or where there should be more input than just a line function. So that is our view of what the relationship ought to be with the Resources Agency.

Let me jump forward a little bit to tell you, so that the listeners to this, the readers to this, can understand when the Conservancy was made permanent, [because] the Conservancy was not [established as] a permanent agency. It was to go out of business in five years and then they got extended and extended and extended. Three times. And then, finally, in 1992, we said, This is stupid, let's make it a permanent agency. It's going to be a permanent agency. So the Legislature made it permanent but as a condition of that put us within the Resources agency. But then we put language in saying that the Resources secretary couldn't determine what our projects were and couldn't tell us what to do in terms of supporting legislation or opposing legislation. Ultimately we have written in statute now just about the right relationship. But that was not at all clear that that would ultimately eventuate back in 1980. So there were these tensions.

Now in terms of State Parks. Interesting. The Parks Department has always had an ambivalent feeling about Santa Monica Mountains. A lot of the acquisitions, although some of the jewels in the Parks System, were viewed by some of the old-timers as being politically determined, which they were. Bill Mott--I think everybody agrees that Point Mugu State Park, [is] a wonderful, tremendous addition with the Boney Ridge. You look at that and [think], God, this is just great. Okay? You look at Century Ranch [in] Malibu Creek State Park and that was a totally politically determined deal but it got some gorgeous territory there. The Goat Buttes there are some of the prettiest areas in the whole Santa Monica Mountains. But it clearly was a political deal. And Ronald Reagan sold his ranch to 20th Century [-Fox] a year-and-a-half before the state went ahead and bought that ranch, as well as Century Ranch with an appropriation in advance of the Bond Act. And Bob Hope sold his land to the Park and that was one of the deals that Bill Mott and Bob Myers, who was chief deputy director of the department, made. One of those political deals. Now a great thing came out of it. If you enjoy sausage, don't look at how it's made, and if you enjoy that park, you don't have to look at how it's made.

Topanga State Park, much more controversial. Topanga State Park was specifically designed to protect the view-shed around the Palisades Highlands development project, and was sold by Garden Land Company specifically with the view toward that objective to State Parks. That was a Bill Mott deal. A lot of people objected to that. A lot of people said, The whole thing should be protected, or give it away, but this sale with the donut hole doesn't make a lot of sense within the traditional State Parks mold. We're talking now in the '70s and early '80s. The State Parks System was much less viewing itself as the keeper of the ecological keys and much more in a, Here we have a state park so now let's provide camping, let's provide traditional type of park services. The principal person who caused them the most grief was Sue Nelson. In developing the Malibu Creek State Park they ran up against a buzz saw. A buzz saw of opposition.

Within the department, I know, there was just an enormous revulsion about the Santa Monica Mountains. It was, first of all, They demand so much. The money per acre cost. We can--I'm exaggerating--but they said, We can buy half of Northern California

with what it takes to buy 1,000 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains. Then when we want to put in a modest campground development and a new entrance road we are blown out of the water. And it took them years and years and years--I think it took them 10 years--to get the campground in at Malibu Creek State Park. So there was part of the department in the early formative years--1979 was [when] the legislation was going through--[who] were saying, A pox on the Santa Monica Mountains.

I don't think that they ever thought we would be as successful as we were in terms of funding. The first appropriation was a million dollars, and that was in the 1980 bond. They said, That's fine. Eh, dribs and drabs over there. They did not want to have major amounts of money assigned to the Santa Monica Mountains, because they viewed it as a drain on other parts of the Park System. They had some major appropriations which they sought to revert, and in California the State Parks is given an appropriation for a specific line-item purpose. If you want to change that purpose you have to go to the Legislature for the change of purpose. If you don't go the Legislature within three years, and you don't expend the money, then it reverts back to the original pot of money and you can re-spend it somewhere else.

We're getting now into 1979. In 1979 they had--for the property that's now called the Soka property, Soka University property. You've heard a lot about that probably.

PITT: Claretville is what they called it originally.

EDMISTON: Exactly. They reverted that money . . .

End of Tape 2, Side B

Beginning of Tape 3, Side A

PITT: Joe, please continue. I may have occasion to hear your voice and stop and hear how it's recording.

EDMISTON: Okay. I'll move closer here to the mike.

So we have reversions that are coming up in the budget of 1979 and they amounted--I forget the exact amount--but there was a very significant amount of money, $6 or $7 million, perhaps as much as $8 million. I know that they reverted $4.2 million on Claretville and there was a substantial amount of money on Lower Topanga. In fact it might have been an equivalent amount. Now that I'm thinking about it, around the magnitude of $8 million strikes me. They wanted to spend it in other places around the state. We were attuned to the budget process and brought political pressure to bear for that money to be redirected to the completion of the Backbone Trail. [That] was a high priority for the local environmentalists, a high priority in the Comprehensive Plan, a high priority for everybody in the Santa Monica Mountains. There was a lot of hostility to that in the department. For one thing, here was another state agency basically telling them how to spend their money and we were very political and Howard Berman was at the

height of his powers at that time and he simply said, "No, you're not going to take money out of the Santa Monica Mountains." And [what] was worse yet, from the department's standpoint, it was not just the Backbone Trail. It was [also] to acquire the Willacre property and to pre-acquire Doheny Ranch. One of the things that I don't think people realize is [that] State Parks first acquired Doheny Ranch. And then National Park Service acquired it from State Parks. It was a result of this bill that the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission carried, AB 3663, in 1979. We didn't carry it. Howard Berman carried it, but we were the proponents of it. We, the Comprehensive Planning Commission, were telling Berman what to put into AB 3663, and State Parks was miffed that these funds were allocated. So the department is saying, Okay, even though good popular acquisitions, [they're] directing our money. We buy things in the mountains and we can't develop them so we can't provide public access, we can't provide services, so a pox on your house. The [State Parks] department basically said, Our acquisition program in the Santa Monicas is complete. We got the three big parks, you forced us to do the Backbone Trail and all this, and we have the National Park Service coming in, all this federal money coming in. Okay. We're standing pat.

Now there was one person who didn't have that view and that was Alice Wright Huffman. She ultimately became a very controversial head of the California Teachers Association. She was chief deputy director of [State] Parks. A very aggressive black woman. I loved her. She was extremely political. I don't think she knew very much about parks in the sense that she wasn't an old-line park person, but she was a very definite operator. She could look into the future. Alice stood alone of everybody. [Russell W.] Russ Cahill, who was director at the time, just couldn't really see the future State Parks role. Alice told me, she said, "Within the administration I'm a lone voice on this, but the future State Parks is doing the kind of things that you're doing. That's what we ought to be doing." And I said, "Well, Alice, you know the fact is that had you been doing it, and had you not reverted . . ." I mean one of the things that got people like Howard Berman going on the need for a separate agency was the fact that he saw the money being drained away. [He] saw that there wasn't this embracing feeling of, Oh, [good], another Santa Monica Mountains acquisition. [Instead] it was, Oh, another headache. So as I said with the exception of Alice Wright Huffman, the chief deputy director, I think the department was kind of happy to push the Santa Monica Mountains away.

PITT: What was it that she liked about what you were doing?

EDMISTON: This is the time that the bill was going through. She saw that the future was not necessarily buying areas to put campgrounds in, but buying areas which were much more relevant to things like the development issues. What the Conservancy really is, is dealing with a whole number of issues that are brought up in the broader political context of what to do about the Santa Monica Mountains. Not just carrying out a limited Parks mission. [That] is what really distinguishes us from State Parks, from National Park Service. They consider themselves to have a Parks System mission, and so we will acquire a number of pieces of property because they [solve] a political problem having to do with a development, for example. Somebody is proposing a big development. It sits in the middle of a community that doesn't want to see that happen. Local government doesn't want to regulate it, so we end up buying that piece of property. It probably is a

property that has intrinsic benefit in and of itself, but would you say this is critical to the State Parks System? No. Would you say it's critical to the National Park System? No. Maybe enough of these aggregated together, yes. But in and of itself these are the kinds of acquisitions and the kinds of projects that a State Parks System or a National Park System simply wouldn't deal with. The Conservancy is designed to deal with the whole gamut from the Big Sky wilderness areas down to the small subdivisions that need to be purchased and reconsolidated and then resold on the open market so [that] you [can] take 100 small lots and maybe consolidate them into 10 or 20 appropriately sited lots. That kind of thing.

[Huffman] saw, that with all the political constituency, exactly what would happen--that there would be a political constituency that would develop for the Conservancy for doing things. When you're buying land in Brentwood, when you're buying land adjacent to Beverly Hills, when you're buying land in Malibu, when you're buying land adjacent to Encino, there's a whole different and powerful constituency that develops that is different from buying land in Mendocino County. So she saw that. And she was a very urban-oriented person, very politically oriented. [She] went on, as I said, to become the head of the California Teachers Association--not the teacher head but the political head of the association--and had a very controversial tenure there, because she was very overtly political.

But the department did not go along with [her view], Russ Cahill did not go along with it. The department was basically saying, Here's what we would like from you. And they gave us a laundry list. We have the following in-holdings--this in-holding, this in-holding, this in-holding, and this in-holding. We said, Okay, and we ticked off and went through and acquired those in-holdings. Every single one of them that the State Parks wanted. That was basically it. They said, Okay, that's it. So our initial relationship, after we did that, was cordial enough, but, again, they were always looking [and thinking], Gee, is there going to be an appropriation of ours that's going to be stolen. And since they basically had no more in the Santa Monica Mountains that we hadn't already stolen from them--the Legislature had re-appropriated the Santa Monica Mountains--that never became an issue. And the statute was written in such a way that State Parks is our favored consumer. It has not turned out that way, but statutorily we, for example, may give a piece of property to the National Park System but we have to offer it first, at no cost, to the State Parks. And in every case they have said, No, fine, go ahead, do your deals with the National Park Service.

And, now again fast forwarding, the relationship is much better because we have a joint memorandum of understanding that governs National Park Service, State Parks, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

PITT: You were operating back then without any joint understanding or memo or contract. [The new relationship] evolved when? In the '90s?

EDMISTON: This evolved in the late '80s and early '90s. The big thing that happened beyond the time-frame that we're talking about is--although it started in 1980--the idea that there would be lands acquired for which there would be no immediate recipient. What happened in Washington--the Jim Watt influence--had an enormous influence on the course of both the Conservancy and, obviously, the National Recreation Area. So

we're now in mid-1980. I don't know how far you want to go. Do you want to go through the end of 1980?

PITT: The end of 1980 is fine.

EDMISTON: Okay. Well, actually let's go to the spring of 1981. Can we do that?

PITT: Okay.

EDMISTON: Because that'll [take us] to the beginning of the Reagan administration.

PITT: That'll be a good place to stop.

EDMISTON: It is widely assumed that Reagan was the one that killed the big appropriations to the Santa Monica Mountains. That is not true. It was in the spring of 1980 that Carter got religion about budget-cutting. Being a fiscal conservative, [he] proposed federal government-wide massive recisions of appropriations that had been made in the, basically, liberal heyday, which was the budget [of] the fiscal year starting October 1, 1979 through September 30, 1980. So as the polls looked more and more tenuous for him and Reagan looked stronger and stronger, he [did] this massive budget cut. That was in April of 1980. [There was] immediate pressure from the constituency. And, implied, pressure from the Park Service [who] were seeing this happen. They reverted about $20 million of the $42 or $43 million of the initial appropriation. They were able to get out the money for those three big acquisitions that I told you about, before the reversions happened.

The pressure immediately came on the Conservancy not to focus on some of the things that were in our charter and that we thought we were going to be focusing on. Instead, to focus on trying to supplant the money that had been lost to the Park Service, and, when we got to the Reagan administration, the initiative that was lost in the Park Service. So the tremendous public support for the National Recreation Area when it looked like then they would be out of money then it was, Oh, Conservancy, you've got to step into the breach, and do, essentially, National Recreation Area type things. And we had a different work program in mind. We had a work program that had more to do with reconsolidating small subdivisions. It had more to do with some of the smaller areas, [and dealing] with community problems [such as], Here's a development project that's a big problem, so let's deal with it. So there was this tension here, again, between one version of the mission, and the version of the mission that's basically a rescue operation. Not that we could rescue $20 million worth, but we could try to step into the breach. The constituency was so great for our trying to step into the breach, that that clearly became the mission, and only today are we seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, and starting to say now we have to address some of these other questions.

PITT: Directly following that point, I want to ask you this. Last time you talked about "our coalition" and now you're talking about an "evolving constituency." Could you define those a little bit better?

EDMISTON: There's always a transitory constituency for whatever park is most under threat. So our constituency consists of a few organizations and individuals that are pretty much with us all the time. [There is also] a changing pattern of faces, geography, and politics dealing with whatever issue is coming up. I think the Sierra Club [task force] has generally speaking been pretty supportive. I've only been to one meeting and they were pretty gentle--but I'm told there are some pretty vocal people both ways on that. Certainly the homeowner organizations have by-and-large been one of the mainstays of our support, and their opposition to development projects in their communities is the main reason. Up until recently those homeowner organizations have understood that the rhetoric they have to pursue is a rhetoric of general public benefit and not of, Save my backyard for me because it's in my backyard. For the affluent communities in the Santa Monica Mountains, that's not a persuasive rhetoric, it's not a form of persuasion. You can't really go to Sacramento and say, You know the poor folks in Brentwood are really suffering because there's going to be another million dollar house in their community. That doesn't sell. So they adopted the rhetoric of larger public benefit, bring people into the mountains, it's close to the urban area, all of those persuasive devices that we also use, I think in some cases more genuinely. As I said recently, they've kind of taken the mask off and adopted a kind of Me First attitude, Me First because it's me and that has started to backfire on them.

But for the largest part of the Conservancy's history [talk of the public benefit] was a sort of mainstay, and because it was homeowner organizations [and] well-acknowledged environmental groups like the Sierra Club, it was an easy thing for politicians to identify with us and to support us. It almost became support of the Conservancy to support this whole sort of mind-set about pro-homeowner, pro-environment, with a tinge of pro-other-general-public-benefit because we believe it and we really think that that's one of the main reasons for this recreation area, because it is serving approximate to so many people in need.

The transitory coalitions are the individual developers who are in trouble and want their land purchased or the immediate groups around. I'll give you a good example subsequent to your 1981 time frame. It's about the 1993 acquisition of the Disney property in Upper Topanga Canyon. They were going to put in a golf course, an odious development. And Topanga and the Topanga Association for a Scenic Community had always been sort of mildly supportive but hadn't really been part of the mainstay. Then we proposed making this acquisition at Topanga and we made the acquisition. Oh! [We became] tremendous heroes. And there were handwritten signs all over Topanga. "Thank You, Conservancy" and all this. But now they're quieted down and are going about their little Topanga thing. So that's a good example of a transitory part of the coalition. But for the time that we were trying to buy that property, they were an important vocal part. And you'll find this now in Glendale near the Oakmont Project. Five million on the governor's budget this year. Again, the same kind of thing. We don't hear from Glendale often, but here's a big project they don't want to see built, so now they've become a big part of our world.

PITT: Back in '79, '80, '81, what did you hope was going to be your relationship with local jurisdiction, county and municipalities, and so on?

EDMISTON: We thought that the primary relationship was going to be one of our input into the regulatory process and it has turned out that that is in fact the case, but not using the vehicle that we thought. What has matured is pretty much an understanding on the part of every developer, especially in the city of Los Angeles, and more recently in the county, that they really pretty much need to make peace with the Conservancy in terms of the open space that they're going to have before they go ahead with a project. And that's not universal, but in general, your smart developers knock on the door first. So we've had a fairly substantial influence on the configuration of some of these projects by saying, There's not enough open space, here's what you need to [do to have] open space.

We have thought that the issues were going to be fought out on such things as density, and the appropriateness in traffic--the planning issues that we would be carrying forward, the planning issues in the Comprehensive Plan--but instead the most persuasive issues turned out to be the park and open-space issues. Those were the ones where we were deemed to have credibility because, for one thing, we were in the business, and second, it was a way of pointing to larger public benefit. When they're saying, Oh, we don't want these people coming in to this new subdivision because it's going to increase traffic on the roads, who are the people who are complaining? The people who are already there. People are saying, Let's pull up the gangplank. We don't want more people. When they're saying, Oh, the project is too dense, what they're really saying is, We don't want more neighbors. We want fewer neighbors. Well, that's not a public policy objective. When they're saying, however, More of this land should be available to the public, we should have trailheads, we should have trails, and that by [allowing] private housing on a large segment of their property we are depriving the larger public of the opportunity to use the Santa Monica Mountains-- that's an entirely different argument.

We have had an uneasy relationship with some communities and a very good relationship with other communities where that has been used as the justification for cutting the project down or in some cases buying the land. Then some communities have turned around and said, This land is so important and so valuable that only those people who care about it, like we do, walking our dogs there every evening, only those people should really be allowed to make use of it and [we should] not develop any facilities to bring in others who wouldn't care for it as passionately as we do, as we walk our dogs.

Fortunately, the great bulk of the communities adjacent to our parks understand that that's a good recipe for never having another open-space dedication. So communities like the Briarcliff community in Willacre, which was an acquisition, and the Tarzana community's [support] for the Mulholland Park dedication [of] 800 acres--it was dedicated around the Mulholland Park subdivision off of Reseda--are examples of communities [that] have understood, by and large, that they have to accommodate the public.

PITT: Cahill said that one of the things that he wanted was to expose as many minority youngsters from the inner city to the wilderness experience or to the recreational experience of the mountains, and that he wasn't always successful in getting that done. What was your take at that time on that issue?

EDMISTON: I don't think that they tried very hard and when they did try, they tried by a frontal assault. I have to say that I think that the State Parks System post-William Penn Mott had such an ambiguous view of the Santa Monicas that it prevented them from doing what they had done very, very well in other parts of the state. And I think in large part it stems from the fact that there were other entities there and particularly the National Park Service. Maybe they will deny it, maybe this resonates in other interviews that, of course, I haven't heard, but there's this feeling that, Gee, if there's more credit to be gotten it's the feds that are going to take it, if there's more land to be acquired it will ultimately [end up with] the feds. Who's got the bigger budget? Well, the feds. So why should we really stake reputations and people's careers on this park given that it's never going to really yield the bang for the buck in terms of allocation of resources? So I must say that I don't think that the department tried as hard as they could to do that, and certainly they did encounter opposition. It happened.

I don't know if I told you about the Recreational Transit Program. This is exactly apropos. In 1978 we got a grant from the Urban Mass Transportation [Agency?], UMTA. We got a federal grant that started out only with $35,000--while we were still the Comprehensive Planning Commission--to run a bus program into the Santa Monica Mountains. This was embraced by State Parks because they were the favored venue. Malibu Creek State Park then still had the *Roots* set, which was a tremendous draw from the minority community. An immense draw. [The amount of bus traffic] from the black community to the *Roots* set was just incredible.

[Jill Swift and I] had a colloquy. It was at a public hearing where there was a great objection from the people in the Santa Monica Task Force of the Sierra Club. Jill Swift and Margot Feuer were the co-chairs of that Task Force. Jill Swift came up to me and said, You know, they're not going to get that much from this experience. You can't just pluck somebody from the inner city [and set them] out in the middle [of the wilderness] and have them appreciate it, and that's basically what you're doing here. And then if [the visitors] don't appreciate it, [the developers] will say, Oh, we don't need this, and [the area] can be developed. Really they won't know what to do; there are no curbs for them to sit on. And I said, What did you just say? And just jumped right on it. And she said, Well, you know, nothing will be familiar to them. Jill does not recall this conversation, but it happened.

Now what happened was there was a cultural shock, and I will admit to cultural shock. The very first day that we had this program I came a little bit late as I'm [liable to do]--you saw an example of it this afternoon--and kids were coming back from the buses. The buses had taken them [out to the] Malibu Creek State Park to the *Roots* set, and here I was walking up the trail and coming toward me were teenagers, high school age. A guy with a boom box on his shoulder. In those days [they] had these giant boom boxes. A very big black girl was gyrating to the music coming down the trail. And, of course, the loud music--these gyrations are not typical of Sierra Clubbers--these are things that had probably never been seen before in Malibu Creek State Park. For a moment I was really put off. And then I realized, Wait a minute. They're here enjoying. That boom box affects my enjoyment. But on the other hand, they'll probably learn later on to take the boom box out. And I encountered them. I said, "What did you think about this." [They said,] Oh, it was great, and they went on and on about the *Roots* set. That was a big thing and that was something they could directly relate to and it's too bad that all of the sets had to

be removed because they were obviously flimsy, they were not intended [to be permanent]. And that's not part of the mission of the State Parks to keep those particular sets. That was an encounter [where] I got over my white cultural bias in about five seconds. I'm not sure that a lot of other people seeing that same thing [would feel the same]. What we have done subsequently is we have docent programs. I mean, I think we do a very good job actually of saying, No, these resources are not an opportunity just to have your boom box.

But I think that there was a feeling on the part of a lot of the folks that unless the minority communities embraced the natural aspect of it immediately, that they were going to say, Okay, you've sold this as benefiting all of Los Angeles but it really doesn't. So false advertising. I think they were deathly afraid of that, because, and I'll be very blunt about this, I don't think in their heart of hearts that's what their motivation was. It was a convenient rhetorical tool and didn't fit. So they said, Oh, oh, we're going to be found out. Well, the fact of the matter is that we had already found in doing surveys, and part of the Comprehensive Plan--I don't know if you've ever read it--is very uneven. I wrote a lot of it. I'm not going to defend it--but the transportation and public access portions of it are probably some of the best [parts]. And we did a license plate survey of various areas within the Santa Monica Mountains and found that heavily Hispanic areas were concentrated around what was then Tapia County Park. What was the reason? The reason that we were able to deduce was that a lot of the families were coming to visit inmates at Camp David Gonzales. But what we found out was that because there were so many Hispanics there, they said, Oh, this is a place where our kind go. So they would come back, not to visit an inmate but to recreate because they knew they were going to find people who looked like themselves.

How many times do we have pure recreation, discretionary recreation, where we don't go to a place where we find people of our kind? People don't do that. So the key thing is to get enough minorities--soon to be majority--into the mountains so that there's a comfort level there. Once that comfort level is established, then the reactions tend to be pretty typical across all communities. Everybody likes trees. Everybody likes nature. So the fear that they had that, Oh, they really wanted to be down playing basketball someplace, is not at all true. But at that time, we didn't know it. And we're on the cusp. And it was taking a risk.

So again, in large measure, the State Parks System wanted to be relevant but not so relevant as to expose itself to potential criticism from people who, they had learned, were very potent in their criticisms, such as the Sue Nelsons, such as the Jill Swifts. And again, it goes back to this issue of the development of Malibu Creek State Park where they were fought tooth-and-nail on issues that may or may not have been significant. There were questions about a Native American village, and all kinds of things. But of course we couldn't do the access road into the park because it might affect the Native American village, [and such]. [The State Parks people] thought these things were made up by Sue and Jill. Now I don't know the truth of the matter. But [State Parks] thought it was all made up by the extreme enviros. When 20th Century-Fox was there, there was this road, the same road, so why couldn't we have a road now [not as] access to the movie ranch, [but as an] access to the park for the people? That was the question many Sacramento State Parks staffers were asking. That's a question that I hope [whoever does her interview] addresses to Sue Nelson.

PITT: I want to keep my part of the bargain here. It is 5:35.

EDMISTON: And we have come to the end of 1980.

PITT: [And] a little bit into 1981. That's good. And I want to thank you for the interview. I'd be honored to come back another day for the rest of the story.

EDMISTON: Okay. Great.

End of Tape 3, Side A

End of Interview

— VIII —

IN THE TRENCHES FOR CONGRESSMAN BEILENSON

An Interview with Linda Friedman

Linda Friedman, an aide to Congressman Beilenson in the 1970s, was interviewed in her home in Los Angeles on Friday, March 27, 1998. The interview was conducted by Dr. Leonard Pitt.

Interviewee: Linda Friedman
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: Well, Linda, I think what I'd really like to do is give you a chance to tell your story from beginning to end, in your own words, as long as you want to go. If it takes 10 or 15 minutes, we have plenty of tape. And then I would ask you some questions. I will take some notes, and we'll fill in any gaps. Do not worry about being out of chronological order. We can always go back. This doesn't have to be in perfect sequence. So why don't you begin and I'll let you tell your entire story and then give you particular questions that I prepared or that occurred to me from listening to you. Please.

FRIEDMAN: That's fine, Len. I recall that when I first went to work for Tony Beilenson in 1976, that very first spring of his first session of Congress, Gail Osherenko and I--Gail's a woman who worked for Tony in his Los Angeles office--brought together a group of interested individuals who really cared about the future of preserving parkland in the Santa Monica Mountains. We had a large array of individuals and various organizations. I think the state was there. I don't know if the Santa Monica Conservancy was in existence at the time, but I think they were in some capacity. They might have had a different name, but they were there, too. And people like Sue Nelson and Margot Feuer and Jill Swift, and just a host of different individuals who had an interest in this area and preserving it.

The meeting was called for them to give us input about what they thought would be the most viable way of trying to protect this land. And after the meeting I remember talking to Tony with Gail and deciding we should introduce some legislation to create a national Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Island national recreation area, as I recall. So we went to the legislative analyst's office at that time, and they drafted some legislation which I believe we probably passed around to a lot of these groups and then introduced our legislation amidst a big fanfare. Well, I don't think it ever went to hearings that year, and then it died. It was very disappointing to everyone. But, you know, we wanted to keep the struggle going on.

PITT: I'm going to ask you to stop for just one second and move your chair in just a little bit. That is much better. Thank you.

FRIEDMAN: So I believe Tony introduced legislation again. And at that time there was an Omnibus Bill. I think it was an Omnibus Park Bill.

PITT: In the Congress?

FRIEDMAN: In the Congress. That Rep. Phil [Phillip] Burton [had introduced].

PITT: That's what it was. It was called that, too. Right.

FRIEDMAN: Right. And, you know, he was a fellow Californian, and I think he cared about preserving parkland. Tony approached him about including our little bill into his larger bill, and it was included and there were hearings on the bill back in Washington, D.C. A big miracle occurred. I think it was in October or November [that] the legislation passed. At that time I think it was already in a House/Senate Conference Committee and it was very quick that this happened, as I recall.

It wasn't something that was really new to Congress. I think before Tony there had been several other congressmen who had introduced similar legislation so people were familiar with this concept. There was very little opposition to it, except for developers [who] were not too happy about this bill. As I recall, after it was passed other people were not too happy about it either. For example, people who had existing uses in the parkland that were various children's camps and recreational facilities, and that sort of thing [were, and] who thought they would be affected by this legislation in some way. Which, of course, we assured them they would not. I mean, if anything it would enhance their position in the community because there probably wouldn't be other people doing the same thing.

Little did we know, when the legislation passed, that that would be the easy part of the struggle. The real struggle came in trying to get Congress to appropriate dollars to not only buy land, but also to fund an office of the National Park Service in an appropriate manner so they could carry out the mandate that was set by the legislation. And that was probably my biggest role in this whole thing besides being the community liaison here in Los Angeles between all the various groups. There was some internecine warfare between them, and I'd have to play political games and talk to one group and have them reconcile with another group. I really don't want to name names because I don't think I can remember at this point. But I played that role quite often and would have lots of meetings and different things would come up and, of course, people had different priorities [as to] what lands they wanted. Some wanted to protect lands in the eastern part of the park and some people wanted to buy the lands that were more expansive in the western part of the park. So there was a lot of contentiousness amongst the groups once the legislation was passed. Much more so than in the beginning when everyone just really cared about getting the legislation through and figured that we would have just oodles of money to spend because, I think, the bill called for $150 million or $155 to be spent in this area.

At that time real estate wasn't what it is today. It's already 20 years ago and land could be picked up fairly cheaply if the money could be appropriated. And, of course, that was very difficult because that was at a time when Reagan was cutting taxes so there wasn't as much revenue available for these purposes. And, in fact, the National Park

Service I think was on some kind of a diet. They weren't supposed to get any money to do anything. They were put on a hiatus.

We were relatively successful in spite of all this and in large part I think that was due to Tony's really good relationship with [Rep.] Sidney Yates who was head of the appropriations committee that oversaw the appropriation of dollars for national parks and the arts and that sort of thing. And then traditionally I would go back to Washington at least once or twice a year, kind of with a shopping list of what people wanted [and] what we were interested in. We learned over the years to earmark what properties we thought should be acquired so that they would have a very concrete idea about what it was we were trying to do. And I would spend about a week or two going from office to office of all the members of that appropriations subcommittee and meeting with staff people, and explaining what the park was all about and what we were trying to do--that this was a large urban area that didn't really have a large park as most other urban areas in the country had, such as New York City or Boston, and all the benefits society could derive from having an outdoor place to go. It was a lot of fun, you know, going around and talking to people and educating them. We spent a lot of time doing that, and we were successful.

I can't remember the exact amount of money that we got each year. But one year, I remember, I was vacationing in Yosemite with my family, and, of course, I knew the appropriations committee was going to let everyone know how much money was going to be appropriated on a specific day. So I called the office and I found out it was like $7 million, so I go running through Curry Village yelling, "We got $7 million! We got $7 million!" And people are looking at me like I'm a lunatic. But I was so excited and it was so thrilling to me that all that hard work had paid off.

Of course, I worked very closely with Tony during that time, and as the subsequent years went on there were different staff members back in D.C. who I would do teamwork with, and then we'd go back to Tony and say, "We really need to talk to this person because he doesn't understand the significance of what we're trying to do." And then Tony would always do everything we wanted him to do. I mean, I think the Santa Monicas was definitely one of the most important things he did in Congress besides saving the African elephant. That was another pet project of his. But I think he feels very proud of the work he did with the mountains, you know, as do I.

Back here at home we would try and keep the enthusiasm going. That was really part of my job, too, to mobilize a lot of the support groups to continue the pressure on Washington in sending letters, and support, and lobbying people that they knew were in a position to help us with what we were trying to accomplish. So we would have rallies and we would have meetings and there was always something going on to try and engender more support here at home so that the people back in Washington knew that this really meant a lot to the population of Los Angeles. And one of my favorite celebrations was out at Paramount Ranch. It was just incredible. We had a couple of thousand people celebrating the creation of the park and we had all kinds of speakers. And I'll never forget Tom Bradley, who was mayor at the time of Los Angeles--I think he was a runner in college--and he was striding across the field in the most majestic way--and it leant such eloquence to the moment. Here we all were in our blue jeans and there was Tom Bradley in his suit jogging across the parklands to make a speech. It was very exciting

and heady to have all these politicians there. We had some celebrities that got involved, too. It was a wonderful experience.

I left working for Tony in 1986, so I spent about 10 years working on this project, and as I said before, it was one of the things I'm most proud of that I've done in my life. After my daughter Rebecca, who is now 18, was born, everyone thought I should name her Monica because of all the work I had done. And I continued to be somewhat involved in the park after I'd left working for Tony. I was always there for consultation for other staff members who had come along and needed to decipher my handwriting in the files because I write like a doctor. No one can read my handwriting. So that was a lot of fun, too, just to kind of keep up on things.

And then I was asked by the then superintendent, Dan Kuehn, who now I think is in Minnesota or someplace like that, and is retired, I still keep in touch with him. That's another story I have to go back to with Superintendent Chandler. But we'll go back to that in a minute. But he convinced me that I should join the Santa Monica Mountains support group that was put together as a non-profit organization to do fund raising for the park so that we could not only publicize its existence more so that more people knew about it, but also raise funds for specific programs or even to buy land. It could kind of go anywhere. There was a lot of precedence for this around the country. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, for example, had a big support group, a friends group, not under the umbrella of the country *per se* but it had a lot of direction from them. I spent a couple of years on this commission and in the middle of it I think I had a baby so I was out about six months. But it just never got off the ground. I guess I didn't have the energy or the inclination to put my life into it, the same way I did when I was working for Tony. I don't think it ever got going, but I'm not sure what the status is of that now. But I had hoped that I could in some way be helpful to this effort.

To backtrack for a minute. One of my favorite stories was in coming back from a successful appropriations trip where we got just like $12 million or something like that, and then going to lunch with [Superintendent] Bob Chandler and John Reynolds, who was the assistant superintendent, and just talking about all the stories and all the travails, and all the people we had to deal with, and all the difficulties. It was just a lot of fun, you know, sitting there with Bob and "kvelling," just feeling so proud of what we all did together because when I would be in Washington and some issue would come up, I'd have to call Bob or I'd have to call someone else, and they'd be faxing me information because so many of these appropriations people, especially the people who work for Sid Yates, really wanted very concrete and specific information and I thought it was wonderful. And I thought it was wonderful because it wasn't like we're just going to give you money because Tony likes it and Sid Yates likes Tony. It's because this is a good project. Of course, that didn't hurt, but [they thought] this is a good project and we think there's a lot of validity to it, and we want to know everything there is to know about it. I was really impressed with the interest and the depth that these committee staffers would go to. They were very serious about what they were doing. These people, in particular, knew a lot about the National Park Service, and all the different parks across the country and how they operated, and what worked and what didn't work. So it was a challenge, really a challenge trying to answer all their questions. So that's in brief, you know, a synopsis of what my role was.

PITT: That's a very good beginning. I think I want to ask you, very briefly, to tell us about your own background before you began work with Tony. Where you were raised, your education, professional training, and did you work on his campaign? Is that how you got involved with Beilenson?

FRIEDMAN: Not at all.

PITT: No. Well, tell us.

FRIEDMAN: Basically, I was born and raised in Los Angeles, graduated from UCLA in 1972, and at that time I was a newlywed. My husband was going to go to law school in Washington D.C., or we thought we'd go to D.C. He'd applied all along the East Coast because we wanted to go back East. We chose Washington D.C. because he got into a good law school there, but also because we felt it would be a good opportunity for me to get a meaningful job. I had been an English major in college, but I always enjoyed current events and civic issues. So I was able to secure a job with then Congressman Tom Rees. This was in 1972.

It was all a fluke that I got the job. No one thought I would be able to get a paid staff position on Capitol Hill right out of college. But I'd applied for a job there, and it turned out that the day my application arrived their receptionist decided to quit. They really wanted someone from Los Angeles and it was just one of those things. You know, it was all timing. It had nothing to do with anything else. Just being there. And so I was hired over the telephone, of all things, by a lovely woman named Jan Faulstic whom I'm still very close with and she stayed on. She worked for Tom, she had worked for [Congr. James] Roosevelt before Tom Rees, and then she stayed on with Tony until he retired and she retired with him. Not with him, She retired at the same time and went with her husband to live in North Carolina. We're still in touch. But anyway, this is the most careful person in the world so it was amazing to me that she hired me over the phone, when in the future she would interview 40 people for a clerk's position. So I started working for Tom at the time as a receptionist and I did, you know, some secretarial work and I would compose letters to legislative requests and do some research. As time went on I was given more and more responsibility, so at the end of five years with him I was one of his legislative assistants, which meant that I would write testimony for him sometimes, and pieces for the Congressional Record, and that sort of thing.

Also, at the same time, I was going to graduate school. I didn't have any children, so I got a master's in English at Georgetown at night and then worked during the day. And Tom was always good to me. If I needed to take a day class he'd give me a few hours off, you know, and I'd make it up another time, or take it off my vacation. So I was able to successfully complete my master's. During this time as well, my husband and I were avid hikers. We loved to hike, and we loved national parks and we started visiting them at that time. So we always had a love of the outdoors and a real desire to protect our environment.

This was 1975, and Tom Rees was retiring, and Tony was running for the office, and for all intents and purposes he was going to be elected. It was a Democratic district and there was no problem. And at that time I did know his campaign manager. He knew that my husband and I were moving back to Los Angeles. We had spent a couple of years

in Washington after graduate school and law school and my husband, in particular, was very eager to come back to Los Angeles and start a family. So this gentleman, Michael Checca said to me, "You know, Tony could really use someone like you in his Los Angeles office, who knows Washington, so that when people come in with sophisticated legislative questions or have inquires, you're going to be able to be of assistance to them in a way that someone who has not had that experience can be." So I thought, Well, this is great. I can have a job before going back home and I can leave Tom early, and my husband and I can go to Europe for six weeks, and life is wonderful.

But there was a little glitch here. You know, I really had to spend a lot of time with Tony because Tony really likes to know his staff well, especially staff that he works with on a personal level, and a rather intense level. So we met. He was in Washington and we went out to lunch and I liked him and he liked me, and he had a million questions to ask me. And we spent about two or three hours discussing politics, and what would I do in this situation, and what would I do in that situation. And a lot of moral kinds of things, too, I think that was really important to him. That I be of upstanding moral integrity, which was interesting. So he said, "Well, I'll be in touch. I'll let you know." So I said, "I'm leaving for Europe on November 15th, and I'd really like to know before I leave if I have a job because it will make my trip a lot more enjoyable. [laughter] I won't feel like I'm spending my last dollar."

So he then would call me like once a week and just chat. He just couldn't make up his mind. He didn't know what to do and he was a little overwhelmed with the fact that he was going to be in Congress and he had to staff up--he already had some staff for the Washington office. Gail Osherenko was one of the people, and another woman, Kathleen Bonfilio who's now Kathleen Levin. So he was bringing them to Washington and I helped convince him to hire Jan because she knew so much about Washington and running an office that he would be crazy not to hire her, so he did. So we kept having these conversations and he kept asking my advice about certain things before I was hired. And then I figured he liked what I had to say.

So finally he called me, like on November 14th, the day before I was leaving on my trip, and he said, "Well, would you like a job?" And I said, "Yes, I would love a job." And that's how it started, and we always had a very real relationship I have to say. Lots of fights about things, when I didn't agree with him. I was always very outspoken with him, I was never a "Yes, sir" kind of employee, and I think he really liked that. No. Not just on the issue of the Santa Monicas where we probably had the least amount of disagreements, but on other issues and things that I did for him. Because I did a lot of other things besides this one project. And we're still very good friends, and we talk and see each other.

PITT: Yes. Now you mentioned in passing that you had to adjudicate between and among the grassroots organizations. Without mentioning names, what were the issues that were driving them apart, or that you had to adjudicate?

FRIEDMAN: Well, one of the major issues, as I mentioned before, was the focus of where the park should be. A lot of people felt it should be toward the west, like where Malibu Creek State Park is, and fill in a lot of areas around there. And there was another contingent of people who felt that land should be in the east. That the park really should

reach, as was mandated in the legislation, to stretch from Griffith Park in the east all the way to Point Mugu in the west. And if you didn't pick up crucial areas of land in the east-- like, oh, gosh, what's that canyon, I can't even think of it, not Coldwater, but in that kind of area Franklin Canyon--there were different lands that were available--that it wouldn't be a viable park. And the problem was that the land in the east was really expensive compared to the land in the west. Those people who wanted to start a park to get on the map wanted it spent there, and the other people wanted it spent here because they knew that that land would be gone to development more quickly. And so it wasn't a black-and-white issue. It was very difficult. And yet, we really wanted to have some kind of unison on what the priorities should be when we went back to Congress. And we didn't all the time, because other people would go back and argue for other parcels of land than I wasn't necessarily arguing for. So we would just have to do the best we could.

It wasn't like we would follow one group or another. Tony always wanted to come to his own decisions about what would be best, and we would always do this in consultation with the Park Service. I think that aggravated some people who felt that the Park Service didn't have the kind of expertise that other people had here, who had been working on this project for far longer than they had, and didn't know the land, which I didn't think was true. I mean, these people were professionals and they spent a lot of time getting to know the park. Even before we had the park, I remember the first visit we had--there was a man named Dick Curry. I don't remember what division he was [with] in the Park Service--but three or four Park Service people came and we took them out hiking and driving and looking at everything. I mean, I remember being pregnant with my first child, going up a canyon, bumping along, to show some person from Washington a certain parcel of land that we thought was important. So those, I think, were the main issues. And egos would get involved and people were very protective of what they thought was best.

But beyond that, it also got into a land use question. How is this land going to be used? Should it be held in public trust and not allow people to come on, or should only a few people be allowed to come? Some people were really preservationists to the point where they didn't want the grass walked on. And other people were for bringing in busloads of kids from Watts.

PITT: Full recreational use.

FRIEDMAN: Right. Exactly. So it was difficult. I mean Tony's feeling, I believe I'm correct in saying, was that this park should be open to great recreational use, that it's an outlet for people who live in an urban area to have this out there. And if you don't allow complete public access, you're not really doing what you want to do, what was intended. So those were some of the problems.

PITT: You were wondering about whether the Conservancy existed, and so on. Maybe you were thinking of a state Planning Commission.

FRIEDMAN: Right. That is what it was.

PITT: Let me mention the members of that commission. Just stop me and pick up any recollections about their involvement and the commission. For example, Marvin Braude was chair. This, I think, is the original membership.

FRIEDMAN: Now, was he a city councilman at that time?

PITT: Yes. Well, at the moment I'm not certain exactly when. But anyway, Marvin Braude, Kathleen Gordon, Linda Burge, Randy Blanc, June Glenn, Edwin Jones, Abe Levy--Abe Levy was [possibly] a lawyer, a labor attorney--Manuel Orozco, Bill Press . . .

FRIEDMAN: Bill Press. Yes.

PITT: Frances Prince, Nita Rosenfeld. . .

FRIEDMAN: I know Nita Rosenfeld.

PITT: Richard Stone, Joel Wachs.

FRIEDMAN: Richard Stone. Joel Wachs.

PITT: Baxter Ward.

FRIEDMAN: Oh, sure.

PITT: Yes. And the staff was Joe [Joseph T.] Edmiston.

FRIEDMAN: Yes. Who I knew quite well.

PITT: Okay. And also on staff, Werner von Gundell and Anita Rudd. So tell me anything that pops into your mind about these folks. I'm assuming that you worked with them from time to time.

FRIEDMAN: We did. And they were involved in this whole process. And I think they were really looking for the federal government to come in and pick up what the state wasn't doing, which was not what we really had in mind. We were hoping for a continued partnership with the state and the federal government so that those lands that the Planning Commission were trying to protect would be protected by the state and the other lands, or if emergency situations came up, there would be money on the federal side. But that is not really what happened. I think a lot of the appropriations in spending depended somewhat on what the Commission wanted, although I think they were able to come up with money later when they metamorphasized into the other group. They were able to raise funds, but maybe through less traditional means--which was positive. And I don't know that the Committee was all that active. I think Joe had an enormous amount of power.

PITT: Edmiston?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. Edmiston had an enormous amount of power and discretionary ability to do basically what he thought was best.

PITT: And what did he think? Did he think therefore that the federal government should pick up the tab mostly at that point?

FRIEDMAN: You know, it's hard to remember. Joe's kind of a chameleon. You're never sure where he's at. He's always trying to make sure that he's always there when it's good. And picking up on that. He's quite a talented politician. I really don't remember that. Sorry.

PITT: I saw a memo in the Beilenson collection entitled, "Inclusion of Ocean Water Areas and Channel Islands." A handwritten note, and it says, "Not for circulation." I'm not even sure what the context was, but in any case, where did the Channel Islands fit into the picture?

FRIEDMAN: Well, they did in as much as they were the westernmost boundary, really, of the park, because those islands, I think, came up out of a volcanic eruption probably millions of years ago. And there was a linkage there between the mountains and the Channel Islands. I think we thought that would be a real complete kind of park, but we just couldn't get anyone to buy it, basically, until later on. We had other legislation introduced after the Santa Monicas to make that a national park, which it has since become. That was a much easier job, because you only had a few landowners. And so in dealing with the Santa Monicas I can't imagine how many landowners have been involved in acquisition.

PITT: Well, tell us about landowners. Perhaps you'd care to mention some particularly who had a stake in the mountains and a position on the national park or the state parks. Who were the big players in terms of landowners?

FRIEDMAN: Well the Ahmansons, you know, had quite a lot of property. I'm trying to think. I just haven't thought about that for a long time. Maybe you could help refresh my memory.

PITT: There was the Bob Hope property.

FRIEDMAN: Right. The Bob Hope property. That's the area north of the Ventura Freeway at Cheeseboro Canyon and that whole area up there. And there was a lot of dissension about that as an acquisition because it was on the other side of the boundary so to speak. And I think the boundary had to be redrawn. I think. Wasn't that true?

PITT: I think so.

FRIEDMAN: Should I include that? I think it's a beautiful piece of property. I think it's absolutely stunning and I have been hiking there a number of times. But I never thought,

in the sense of what we were trying to do, that was an appropriate acquisition, because it wasn't really part of the heart of the park where people could get there easily. And it didn't address those issues of public access and of inner city access. People who lived in the inner city weren't going to drive over two hours to go to Cheeseboro Canyon no matter how beautiful it was. And it would be much more expensive to try to get, for example, school programs and bus programs to get kids up there to see it. But it was purchased. There was just a lot of political pressure.

PITT: Swap.

FRIEDMAN: Yes, there was a land swap and all of that. And it was very controversial. But people were happy. I mean, I think ultimately people were happy. There was never an issue of whether or not it should be protected. But it's always a matter of priorities that we all have to face in our life. Am I going to do this or am I going to do that? And with limited funds you just can't do it all, and you try to be as judicious as you can be.

PITT: Here's a quote, a statement. It's a paraphrase from something I read. Tell me what your view of it is. In the mouths of some of the landowners. "We'll sell some land to the state for state parks, that will enhance our own property value, but we'll defeat the NRA [National Recreation Area] in Congress at every opportunity for its funding."

FRIEDMAN: It's kind of like the NRA. [laughter] You know, it's the same thing, National Recreation Area and the National Rifle Association. It's that kind of vengeance. And I think that was really true of a lot of the landowners. They didn't want Big Brother coming in and telling them that they had to sell their property so that people could use it. And they would be happy to sell part of it to the state, so it became a buffer for them. So they would have this beautiful parkland to look over and still have their property. And that just wasn't in the public interest. You know, I've long regretted that eminent domain was not used more frequently in certain purchases. It's never been used in the Santa Monicas.

PITT: No.

FRIEDMAN: And I think sometimes you just have to take the bull by the horns. It's not like you're going to forget to compensate someone. And I understand it's their land and they care about it, and all that kind of stuff, and that's important. But sometimes the public good is more important, as long as someone is compensated properly.

PITT: Tony did try to do that with the Soka property.

FRIEDMAN: With the Soka property. Right.

PITT: Were there other instances?

FRIEDMAN: That was the only one. There were a few other properties where we had--I can't remember the specifics, you know I haven't had access to the files to refresh my

memory after 20 years--but there were instances where other properties were. We had difficult landowners and the thought of, "Oh, if only we had had eminent domain." But you know Sidney Yates did not like eminent domain and that was a big issue, too. We didn't really want to alienate our biggest proponent in Congress about these things.

PITT: You were thinking of some other properties. How about that Canyon Oaks Estate? This was a big luxury housing development in upper Topanga.

FRIEDMAN: That was one of them. It was like in a bowl.

PITT: Do you have any specific recollection about that?

FRIEDMAN: No. I don't think that was ever purchased. I think, it was developed.

PITT: I think it was, yes, eventually. But under a different name.

FRIEDMAN: You know, when these things would come up we would mobilize all of our grassroots organizations and we would get out petitions and letters. And this wasn't only an effort we took on a federal level. I can remember quite often testifying before the Coastal Commission or the county in matters they were dealing with [concerning] the park that we felt we needed to say something about. Like widening roads. I think that was one. A big thing.

PITT: Yes, especially Mulholland was an issue.

FRIEDMAN: We tracked all these things, and when they would come up I would work with other people and we would go down and testify against these proposed projects. It was always the integrity of the park. I mean, that was always the bottom line. How were we going to make sure that this park was there? That it doesn't become a speedway for cars. Things like that.

PITT: Then when the park was established there was the Advisory Commission that was established. We're not now talking about the state entity.

FRIEDMAN: No. The Santa Monica Mountains [National Recreation Area].

PITT: It first convened in 1980 in a Westwood church and then continued, I believe, for about 10 years. According to the legislation it was supposed to [last that long].

FRIEDMAN: That's true.

PITT: Let me mention some names, and again, tell me if they create any memories for you: Norman Miller as chair, Marvin Braude.

FRIEDMAN: Yes, of course.

PITT: Sarah Dixon, Henry Gray, Mary Hernandez, Michael Levett**,** Susan Nelson.

FRIEDMAN: Yes.

PITT: Cary Peck.

FRIEDMAN: Yes.

PITT: Marilyn Whaley Winters.

FRIEDMAN: I knew quite a few of the people but surprisingly enough, a lot of the names are just names to me. They were on there for political reasons, or because they represented a certain minority, or a geographic designation, things like that. But Sue Nelson was very, very involved with all that, and probably one of the few people who had, from a grassroots perspective, the most to do with the creation of the park. The others--I'm trying to think. Cary Peck was on there, I think mostly because he wanted some visibility because he was running for office. I think he was running for state Assembly or something like that. I guess that's how he got on.

PITT: What about Braude's involvement generally? Not just here. What do you recall?

FRIEDMAN: You know Braude's kind of a--I mean, I like Marvin a lot, I think he's a great guy but very low key. Really. He had a staff person, Cindy Miscikowski who now is a city councilwoman, who ran for Marvin's seat when he retired, who really was kind of the person behind the politician. I was behind Tony, but Tony was out there. He knew it all. Marvin took a little bit of a different role, I think, and relied on Cindy quite extensively.

PITT: Was he--were they--in basic agreement in the way the park should unfold, or did they have more of a western or pro-eastern park?

FRIEDMAN: I don't remember that so much, but I remember having a lot of run-ins with Cindy over the Mission Land Fill up there. She really was supporting the dumpers and we thought it was quite atrocious that there should be a landfill in the middle of a national park. But he had different constituencies to listen to at that time. So my feeling with them was that they were always a little inconsistent and not as strong as they could be, frankly.

PITT: And what about your relationship with Susan Nelson?

FRIEDMAN: You know, that's an interesting one. I was quite young at the time, I was in my mid-20s, late-20s, and her children were maybe 10 years younger than I, so I think she thought of me more as a little kid than as someone whom she could take seriously. So she liked to boss me around and tell me what to do and I just wasn't that kind of person. I would listen to what she had to say, but I wouldn't always follow verbatim everything

that she said I should do. And so we had a lot of run-ins over the years. I really respected her, and liked her in many ways, but it was a difficult relationship. I still talk to her occasionally, and I do admire all the work she's done for the park and on behalf of the park and the people of Los Angeles.

PITT: She has been from the beginning until now of that entire list, of all the names, the most continuously involved.

FRIEDMAN: Oh, absolutely. There are other people that would be involved for like ten years or six years, or they would be involved and then drop out for a while and then come back. But Sue never left working for the park. I mean, to this day she works for the park.

PITT: And was there a clash between the Sierra Club and other groups that you recall?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. I mean, I think there was a clash with the Sierra Club and Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains, which was Ralph Stone's and Sue Nelson's group. There was just a different [approach].

PITT: About how the park would be used?

FRIEDMAN: About the usage and that sort of thing. Right. The Sierra Club's really for the park belongs to the people. I think they really wanted to get people out there. Not that Sue didn't want to, but I think she had a little more of a pristine feeling about it. And my own feeling about the park changed dramatically as time went on. I'd had this view that you can't compromise and you can't relent on what you think is the most important thing. And then as time went on I saw that you have to a little bit because you're never going to accomplish anything [otherwise]. It's all going to get gobbled up if you don't start making some deals and playing around a little bit instead of just having this pristine view of what it could be. And that was hard.

PITT: So that attitude evolved out of just practical experience.

FRIEDMAN: Yes, definitely.

PITT: There wasn't any particular moment when you changed.

FRIEDMAN: No. It was definitely out of practical experience that I saw that that was the way you got things done.

PITT: Now you mentioned Robert Chandler. There was also Dan Kuehn in the line of superintendent. Tell us a little bit more about them.

FRIEDMAN: They were the two that I worked with. And then, of course, there was another one after I left. But Bob Chandler is just a wonderful man. Incredible. In fact, when he first came on as superintendent I really wanted Tony to get to know him well, so I had a little dinner party for Tony and Bob and my husband and I. I still remember I

made Cornish hens, I think, [in] my teeny little house. And they both came over on a week night so we could get to know each other because we knew that we need[ed] to work together a lot and I thought it was really important that there be a good relationship there and understanding about where we were coming from and what he was coming from, and I think he and Tony became good friends. Whenever Bob would go back to Washington, even after he left being superintendent there--he went up to Olympic National Park which was his next assignment--he would always go in and see Tony.

And Tony's always been a big outdoor person, believe it or not. He and his family have visited almost every national park in the country, and they go hiking. Tony [told me] once how they went hiking to the top of Half Dome and they didn't even have tennis shoes on and I thought, Oh, my God, how could anybody do that. And he would describe the ladders to get to the top and one doesn't think of Tony in those terms.

PITT: That's right.

FRIEDMAN: They always think of him as a suit and not as someone who likes to hike. But they do, and they still do. So that really started our relationship on a really healthy note, I think, and quite often when Tony would come out--I did his scheduling--I really always wanted to do scheduling so I'd have some control over where his priorities would be. [laughter] And we'd quite often schedule a tour in the mountains to see a new area, so that Tony really had a feeling [of what] he was fighting for when he went back to Washington. So Bob would arrange to take him out, take us out, and show him new places.

PITT: Before the Omnibus Bill was actually passed there was a lot of resistance in the National Park Service. So that didn't surface afterward? They seem not to have wanted an urban park, not to have wanted a recreation area.

FRIEDMAN: Well, not this park. I don't know. Maybe they had had some difficulties with some of the other NRAs, as they're called, across the country. In Cuyahoga Valley and Chattahoochee and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, because the land tended to be much more expensive than other parks that weren't so urban. And I guess the programming was quite expensive, too, because you have to have special programs, educational programs, etcetera.

PITT: The administration of the park was a very serious and big issue.

FRIEDMAN: It was. Yes. Because at that time--first it was the Carter administration but it was short-lived as we all know--and when Reagan came in they clearly didn't want to fund this park or do anything, so you had people in the National Park Service, employees who really wanted it, but their hands were tied because they were told that they couldn't request funds. That they had to come in like it was a zero-based budget, or something. And so it was difficult, really hard in those years, to get money. But we still did, we just really had to fight. And that was a whole other issue that we had to address at different points along the years. The superintendents weren't getting enough support. They weren't getting enough money to run their local offices and their outreach facilities. And so we

did go after operation money, too. So we were vitally involved not only in creating the park and getting the funds to buy the land, but in trying to help the Park Service do their job because they weren't getting the support that they needed from the National Park Service. Luckily, Bob Chandler was very outspoken about that kind of stuff. As was Dan Kuehn who was his successor. And they are both really, really good men who really cared. And Bob was an outdoor, strappingly handsome [man who] loved to hike. In fact, he remarried, or married again, his wife up in Cheeseboro Canyon. Very romantic wedding. I still keep in touch with him.

PITT: Do you? So you had an incredible array of people to deal with. How do you manage that kind of a balancing act?

FRIEDMAN: That's my job. I'm a woman. You know, a wife and a mom and a worker. You just do. That's just part of your job. But you need to have the personality to do that, which I do. I've always been a facilitator kind of person, bringing disparate groups together and listening to them, and being a leader. And that was really what I was relied on for.

PITT: Let me mention the different organizations or agencies, and tell me if we've left something out, or something occurs to you on how they fit into the picture. There were the grassroots organizations, there were the federal, the state, the county, the city officials. There was, specifically, the City Planning Department, the County Planning Commission . . .

FRIEDMAN: The Coastal Commission.

PITT: The Coastal Commission. Exactly. And then the Conservancy which evolved onto the scene as well in that era. Members of the state Legislature, other members of Congress.

FRIEDMAN: We had a lot to do with that, too, with the state Legislature. Howard Berman was very, very instrumental on that level, and a real supporter of the park, and we worked together personally. He had a good staff person named Muff Singer. I don't know if you've heard that name.

PITT: I have not.

FRIEDMAN: Married to Rick Tuttle, who was the city controller, I think. They were wonderful. When we had a problem that needed to be dealt with, we would have a meeting with Howard, he would just take care of it. And then when Howard was going to Congress he came to us and said, "You have to educate me. I don't know enough." And we'd spend a few hours with him doing that sort of thing.

PITT: What about the county supervisors and the County Planning Commission.

FRIEDMAN: They were impossible. Just impossible.

PITT: Because?

FRIEDMAN: They were in the hands of the developers. That was their job. They didn't care about the park. They just wanted to make bigger roads and more subdivisions, get bigger tax revenues from that, and that was their orientation. I remember once--in fact it was a lot of fun, I was like queen-for-a-day--down at a county commission meeting on road widening. They said they wanted to put a golf course in there or something. I can't remember the name of the supervisor at the time, [but] I totally turned his argument on its head, stating that what he was proposing would bring in far more people than what we were proposing, and it didn't make a lot of sense. So I got [a] standing ovation [laughter] and my photo on the front page of the *Topanga Messenger*. [laughter] It was really fun.

PITT: Okay. Let me mention some of the supervisors by name. Maybe you'll pick out the one.

FRIEDMAN: Okay.

PITT: Pete Schabarum?

FRIEDMAN: No.

PITT: Kenny Hahn?

FRIEDMAN: No.

PITT: Ed Edelman?

FRIEDMAN: No. Ed was always helpful.

PITT: He was helpful.

FRIEDMAN: Very helpful.

PITT: Jim Hayes?

FRIEDMAN: No.

PITT: Baxter Ward?

FRIEDMAN: It must have been Baxter Ward. I'm sure it was Baxter Ward.

PITT: Dean Dana? Mike Antonovich?

FRIEDMAN: No. It was Baxter Ward.

PITT: He was the one.

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

PITT: Anything else then, Linda? We were talking about the supervisors or the county officials.

FRIEDMAN: That's the one specific I remember, but I know there were many instances and various hearings that I might not necessarily have gone to where there was always participation by people who were in support of the park, basically seeing that the county was not and had a different agenda. And we really hoped that everyone [would support it]. You'd think that putting in a national recreation area in an urban area would be an apple pie issue, but it is far from apple pie, and probably more vicious than trying to restrict gun control. I'm now joking, but . . .

PITT: Big stakes, though, in terms of property.

FRIEDMAN: Big stakes in terms of property and money. And whenever you have that . . .

PITT: Yes.

FRIEDMAN: And I think some of the larger landowners were not all that generous, although I think the Ahmansons [were]. I think they got a very good price on that Ahmanson property, which is quite spectacular.

PITT: There were a lot of smaller cities involved. Let's see if I mention them whether you would have any particular general statement about how they fitted into the puzzle, or any specific information.

FRIEDMAN: Puzzle's a really good descriptive word.

PITT: Good word?

FRIEDMAN: Just putting the park together was a big puzzle. A jigsaw puzzle. [laughter]

PITT: Yes. And it looks that way today when you look at it.

FRIEDMAN: You know Conrad. Do you know the Conrad cartoon? A wonderful cartoon that was on the editorial page of the L.A. *Times* when the Reagan administration

wanted to slash our budget and he had a little photo. It said, "National Recreation Area," and there was all subdivisions of homes. It was just wonderful.

PITT: I'll have to look for that cartoon.

FRIEDMAN: I remember we got Conrad to autograph that for Tony for a present from the staff.

PITT: Okay. Let me list off some of these cities and see if it brings anything to mind. Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Thousand Oaks, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills.

FRIEDMAN: I don't think there was anything negative that I can remember. I think that these cities were basically in support of the park because it was their back yard. It increased their property values if there were fewer homes in a close proximity. I don't mean to be so callous about this. But I think the bottom line was--and I'm sure there were people in there who were concerned about the preservation of the land and its public use, etcetera--but I would say that a preponderance of them really cared about maintaining their property values.

PITT: Critics claimed, and I think still claim, that the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area represented the elitism of people on the westside. What was your reaction? Or what would be your reaction?

FRIEDMAN: I really don't believe that. I think it was a park to serve everybody. And I think that was one of the really good arguments about buying property in the eastern part of the park, which was that it would be more accessible to people and not a playground for the rich who lived out that way. And the hope was that there would be money to have a lot of programs out there, and a lot of outreach to all kinds of groups: elderly people, kids, handicapped, whatever, to introduce them to a park. A lot of kids who live in the city have never been out in the open space, and I think there was a big desire for that as well. You know, everyone wins in this kind of situation.

PITT: Any particular recollection about the Coastal Commission and the mountains?

FRIEDMAN: Sometimes they were great and sometimes they were terrible. It really depended on who the commissioners were. And when the commissioners were supportive of the park, they would do whatever they could to limit development along the coast because they believed in that anyway. It really didn't have to do with the fact that it was a national park. They just didn't feel it was appropriate. When they were pro-development it was really tough. And depending on what the administration was in Sacramento, [it] had a lot to do with the composition of the Coastal Commission. You know, some years were tough and other years were not so bad.

PITT: You mentioned Bradley as being one of the celebrants at the original Paramount celebration. Was Yorty in the picture at all?

FRIEDMAN: No. Not that I can remember at all. How many years was he mayor of the city? I don't know if he was ever involved in this issue.

PITT: State legislators. You mentioned Berman. Who else in the state Legislature?

FRIEDMAN: Mel Levine. I'm trying to think.

PITT: Also positively disposed?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes, definitely. When it would come to federal stuff, and of course they both became congressmen, [they] would defer to Tony, which was very nice because he was always considered the main person for this issue, and no one tried to take that away from him.

PITT: So by the time you left the scene, let's see. You worked for Tony from 1976 to 1986?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. Ten years.

PITT: By the time you left the scene what had been accomplished and what remained to be done?

FRIEDMAN: In the grand scheme of things probably very little had been accomplished. I don't know how many acres we had at that time. But we were starting to put the park together. Obviously we had the enabling legislation. We probably had quite a few million dollars in appropriations, and thousands of acres, some public programs, good things going on in the state. Joe Edmiston had a lot of programs. There was a program out at Peter Strauss Ranch. I think at that time it was part of the State Parks, and it was given to the federal government, I believe. I'm not sure what the mechanism of that was. And I know here 10 years later there's still a lot more to be done.

PITT: The Soka property was one of the big issues that was as yet unresolved that year when you left, and is still unresolved.

FRIEDMAN: It's still unresolved. Well, it's kind of like Congress, you know, they deal with different issues forever. [laughter] It's not just that it's Congress. It's just dealing with different entities that make it difficult.

PITT: So little had been done, and yet there was a park, or recreation area.

FRIEDMAN: And I don't think it's the name only. I mean, I think a lot of people say it's the name only that really hasn't come together after all this money and all these years. I think it's a lot of really great programs that even at the outset, the way we envisioned it, wasn't going to be like Yosemite or any other big park that didn't have a lot of inholding. A lot of the parks have inholding.

PITT: Yes.

FRIEDMAN: But the Santa Monicas had thousands of inholdings, so it's a whole different idea. I mean, even when you go to the big parks you still see private homes.

PITT: People who write history often like to think of villains and heroes. Were there villains and heroes here; by recollection, looking back over it a decade or so past the time?

FRIEDMAN: I don't think there were really any villains. I don't think anyone was out to really destroy the park. I think people wanted to protect their own interests. I'm trying to be objective about this. And the landowners probably would have sold if they could've made the same kind of profit as if they had built it out, or something, but that just wasn't going to happen. There wasn't money for that. So, you know, those are hard issues. In this country everyone has the freedom to do what they want to do, and you're not going to have people that are particularly altruistic just because we want to have a park there. So I can't say that there were really villains. I think that's too harsh. I would say that there were people who really didn't want to cooperate very much, who weren't generous in spirit, and who wanted to do their own thing.

And heroes? I'd have to say that Tony's been a hero. As much as he is a close friend of mine, I have to say [it], and he's not even an unsung hero. They have now named part of Sepulveda Basin after him which I think is long overdue. He really devoted a large part of his legislative career to this issue. And I think that's quite remarkable.

PITT: So the name "Father of the Park" is appropriate for him.

FRIEDMAN: I think it is. I really do. And I think it's other people, like Sue Nelson, who certainly deserve a large degree of recognition. Whether I would call her a heroine or not, is maybe superlative, considering her relationship with a lot of people. But I think there's been a lot of people who in their own way have been heroes and heroines in trying to save their little part of the park. And it's really that kind of story that has put this park together. The collective efforts of a lot of people with the individual passion, I have to say, [of] certain individuals for certain pieces of property, that has really made a mark.

PITT: You mentioned Margot Feuer early on. Do you want to recall anything particular [about her]?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. I thought Margot was just a great lady. I don't think she's really involved that much now. She's been involved in different commissions and agencies over the years, but more on an independent basis, I would say. And she was very passionate about the park and spent a lot of her personal time pursuing things that she thought were important. They might not be the same things that other people thought were important but she was out there, putting herself out and trying to do what she could.

PITT: Now, you were an English major and you are a book person.

FRIEDMAN: Now I own an independent bookstore. Chevalier's Books. [Laughing]

PITT: Yes. Mention it again. On Larchmont.

FRIEDMAN: Right.

PITT: Were there any books that influenced you in particular, before, during, or after, in your perception of the mountains or the environment?

FRIEDMAN: Probably afterwards. But it's more about the Midwest. Not Midwest, the West. Reading Wallace Stegner talking about land, and looking at the photographs of Ansel Adams. Things like that have really had a big impact on the way I view these issues and the importance of really preserving treasures that will be gone if we don't take care of them. And so I have over the years--I do a lot of reading being a book person and an English major and all that--but yes, Wallace Stegner's a big influence in my life. In the way land is handled. And, obviously, so many of the beautiful *National Geographic* photography books, and having spent an enormous amount of time in national parks around the country. I mean, I think through the last 20 years we've hit maybe 20 of them all the way from Maine to Alaska to Hawaii. It's just something my family really loves to do. And, in fact, we had an annual reunion in Yosemite for 10 years. We go to Yosemite the first weekend in June and just spend a lot of time in the Santa Monicas. And now that I live near Griffith Park which is at the eastern foot of the mountains, we like to go and take walks in the park and enjoy it. And when I go it has a real special meaning to me.

PITT: I can imagine.

FRIEDMAN: I'm very touched by what I did, even if I might say that.

PITT: What's your favorite place or places in the Santa Monicas? Top of the list.

FRIEDMAN: Oh, gosh, that's so hard. There are so many. But I love Zuma Canyon. I think it's just beautiful, especially in the wintertime when you even get waterfalls coming down. And then there are other canyons where there are just incredible wildflowers in the spring. And it's fun just to go to Paramount Ranch and see where all the movie sets were in the westerns, and that that was part of our heritage here in Los Angeles. That this is very much a movie town, but yet, there it was, right in the park and knowing that *Mash* was filmed up there. I think that's kind of neat. I like that.

PITT: So you do feel great personal satisfaction about what you did and what was done.

FRIEDMAN: I really do. I do.

PITT: That's good.

FRIEDMAN: And my kids are incredible environmentalists because of it.

PITT: Are they?

FRIEDMAN: Especially my youngest. She belongs to the environmental club at school and we go to the beach and pick up trash and we mark drains, you know, for "No Dumping" and [so on].

PITT: None of them named "Monica" though?

FRIEDMAN: No. I stopped at Rachel. [laughter]

PITT: Well, is there anything else that you wanted to say? Any little item that we rushed by too quickly?

FRIEDMAN: No. I think it's been comprehensive in terms of my involvement, and as much as I can remember. And I really regret that I don't remember more specifically some of the political battles and the nuances of the way things came down. But it was a real high experience and a real low experience. When things didn't go well you'd be so devastated from having spent so much time trying to accomplish them. But at least for me, it showed that government can work. I mean, people can come together and propose a project and see it through, and then try and get money, and then try and do programs, and really make it very democratic. That gives me a real positive feeling about our government, although I obviously, like most people, have a lot of problems with the slowness at which government works. But at least in this case, something has been accomplished and that says a lot in and of itself.

PITT: That's a good note on which to stop. I congratulate you on a tough job.

FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

PITT: Well done.

FRIEDMAN: And I appreciate being part of this process. I think it's great that people [will] know about it.

PITT: Yes. I thank you for this interview. Very, very useful. And, again, my thanks to you.

FRIEDMAN: Oh, you're welcome.

PITT: Okay.

[Tape machine is shut off briefly]

FRIEDMAN: Addendum.

PITT: An addendum to the interview. Linda, did you want to mention anything about those helicopter rides? Where and what you saw, and how it may have affected you or others on the trips?

FRIEDMAN: It's a good question. And it affected me and others quite dramatically, I think. It was always very expensive to get a helicopter, but certainly a justifiable expense. We'd always try to get it from the county or some other place where we didn't have to pay for them. But once you could get people up above the park, they could really see the relationship between the open space and the urban area. It was amazing how quickly you can move from one to the other and vice versa, and how large the open space was. And the whole coastline and what it looked like. It was very magical to be up there. Very loud, too. But you got a real sense of the majesty of what this park could be and how close it was. And you couldn't get it any other way because of the traffic congestion in Los Angeles. You know, it could take you an hour to get from an urban area--or an hour-and-a-half even--to get to some of the open space. But up above it looked like everything was just right there. And so I think it enabled people to be very enthusiastic about the project. We would take National Park Service people who were involved in legislative affairs up there, so they understood what it is we were trying to do. Or if you wanted to see a particular piece of land, and how crucial it was to the whole puzzle up there. You just can't do it on the land. It doesn't make sense. And it really made a big difference in the helicopters. And they were scary, too, you know [laughter], but it was a great way to see it.

PITT: Tony was along?

FRIEDMAN: On different times. Sometimes Tony would be. A lot of times [when] National Park Service people were coming out and I knew they were coming out, I would just organize some people to take them out so that they could explain specific things that I wasn't really that knowledgeable about. And Tony certainly was up in them, too. And at that time, [with Tony] we had the whole congressional Interior Subcommittee come out for a field trip once, and we arranged for a bus.

PITT: Around '79?

FRIEDMAN: I think it was in '79. I can't remember exactly when, but [it included] a number of the committee members--which is unusual. I think they just wanted to come to California and this was the way to justify the plane fare. But [they] spent the day with us, looking, hiking, eating.

PITT: Did this involve Phil Burton, as well?

FRIEDMAN: Phil was there.

PITT: What was your reaction to him? Your impressions?

FRIEDMAN: I think I was always in awe of him. You know, he had such a huge reputation, political reputation. He was big and burly. I was amazed, I think, by him and what he represented.

PITT: Was his mind influenced by these trips?

FRIEDMAN: Probably not. I think he was a true politician, if you will. He was looking at what political benefits he could get out of these things. Not that he didn't care about it, but I think he did these things because he had to. I really do.

PITT: Did the helicopter just pass over, or did you actually land somewhere in the mountains and look around.

FRIEDMAN: We would land.

PITT: Yes.

FRIEDMAN: Yes. Different places. And get out and walk. Yes.

PITT: It must have been wonderful.

FRIEDMAN: Incredible. It really fueled me to see more and more parks and have more nature experiences.

PITT: Thanks.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— IX —

PROMOTING A PUBLIC TRUST

An Interview with Huey Johnson

Huey Johnson has been active in conservation work in California since the 1960s, when he worked for the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land. Governor Jerry Brown subsequently appointed him as resources secretary. He also served as director of Resources Renewal International, a non-profit organization headquartered in San Francisco. He was interviewed by phone at his place of work on September 8, 1999.

Interviewee: Huey Johnson
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: [I am] recording and I will say that this is Leonard Pitt interviewing Huey Johnson on September 8, 1999 [by telephone]. I want to thank you for allowing this interview. I know you have some strict time constraints because you are going on a long trip and you're preparing for it. We're going to try to limit this particular interview to one hour, and if necessary come back another day. Before we get into the middle of things, Huey, maybe you can just tell me what the weather is like there today and I'll see how the voice levels are registering on my tape records.

JOHNSON: Testing, one, two, three, four. Four score and seven years ago.

PITT: Okay, it is now flickering pretty well. I think I've got it. And before we get into the core of the interview, could you please tell us very briefly about your background as a youngster, where you were born and raised and educated?

JOHNSON: I'm Huey Johnson. I have had a career in the environmental area in California particularly. I originally was the only employee of The Nature Conservancy west of the Mississippi, at a time when The Nature Conservancy had eight employees and was struggling to establish a presence here. I was raised in Michigan, and graduated college there, got a masters at Utah State University in environmental policy issues and I've had the good fortune of being in this field about 40 years. Getting out of college, I worked for a large chemical corporation. I've taught school, done research, worked for the Fish and Game Departments in California and Alaska, and been an activist on the board of a number of organizations. I had an avocation of starting nonprofit environmental organizations. In particular, I started, after The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, which now has 20 some offices around the country. I started the Grand Canyon Trust and the U.N. Environmental Liaison Center in Nairobi and things like that. I've had a wonderful career from my own perspective. I've done exactly what I wanted to do every morning--to be a watchdog over the UN environmental agency.

PITT: I'm glad to hear that somebody gets to do that. Let me start this way. Several people have pointed out that you were one of the major players in the Santa Monica

Mountains, developing policy for the parks, certainly back in the ’70s. There seem to be three aspects to your involvement: one was The Nature Conservancy, another was the Trust for Public Land, and, of course, last but not least, as resources secretary under Governor Jerry Brown. Please tell us in narrative [about these different aspects]. You can take as long as you want. I won’t interrupt for 15 minutes or so, and just tell us about those involvements.

JOHNSON: Alright.

PITT: What I might have to do is simply stop this machine and see how it’s recording. [Recorder turned off momentarily] Please start again.

JOHNSON: As you’ve mentioned, my involvement is in three different areas of responsibility. One, the early years in The Nature Conservancy, then leaving The Nature Conservancy, starting the Trust for Public Land, and one of our earliest major transactions was there in the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains. Then, as a state official, secretary of the Resources Agency, responsible for California’s resource policy matters for five-and-a-half years. And with that there’s a concern that I feel because in all those positions I had people that I would assign to the transactions in addition to what I was doing. I don’t have the time to go back into my personal files in an attempt to clearly differentiate what was what, so there may be some inconsistencies. Certainly, there will be.

I arrived in California back in the early ’60s as the western regional director of The Nature Conservancy. It was a young organization at that time. We had a chapter structure in the nation, and one of the best ones we had was The Nature Conservancy, Southern California Chapter. Those people were often academics, retired officials of one sort or another, but they really were concerned about coastal matters, desert matters, and the Santa Monicas, so my early visitation there would have been with them. They would go wander around and find places that would be wonderful to be saved for one reason or another and we really did more looking--you might say tire-kicking--than we had resources to do saving in those early years. None the less, it gave me an introduction through their eyes and their passions to the region and its potential. I served The Nature Conservancy for nine years.

We were a different Nature Conservancy in those years in that we were often involved in conflict, where today the broad Nature Conservancy headquarters in Washington has a national budget of $500 million. It has thousands of employees. We had eight employees--a fascinating, pioneering experience--plus the fact that I had 13 western states. I was responsible for anything that happened in that region. I was off in Arizona saving a cienega, or up in Idaho working on some wetland and river, or whatever. Those transactions are all part of records. The politics of them and the participation in the emerging environmental awareness of the time had us often working not just on land things, but testifying in Sacramento on trails and toxic policy, and other things.

There just weren’t that many organizational voices that made up the environmental movement at that time. So we tended to reach further than I think many organizations do today that have been able to refine and focus on particular issues and

areas. I do feel that there was an advantage, though, to that broader generalist approach because land does touch everything. You've got concerns about energy, you've got siting issues, you've got wetlands concerns, you've got watershed concerns, you've got constant conflict over real-estate interests' desires to develop anything that's level or even anything that has a market value, because then we had less restrictive zoning. We were really walking around ready to shoot on a moment's notice, and often did. I look out my window where I'm sitting here--my offices are on the end of a pier jutting into San Francisco Bay. The first year I came and sat on the north section of the Golden Gate bridge. Therein, a huge proposed new town, the developer was going to build high-rises for 25,000 people on top of all the hills on the northwest side of the Golden Gate. We locked onto that with a couple of others and blocked it. That would be an example of the extreme conflict we got in to.

In the Santa Monicas, however--the issue of this interview--we were thinking in terms of trying to herd the powers that be into a cooperative position. As politicians would change, we would attempt to educate them, and placate them, and get them to sign on, or come on a field trip, or do whatever had to be done. Over the years, certainly, we would talk with the L.A. mayor and his staff, [the Board of Supervisors, the water and sewage and other agencies that were applicable].

The political hangers on, the people close to people in office, in those years anyway, were rarely oriented to land preservation. They were more often really keen political activists. They were the ones who could deliver money and legislation. So that was kind of The Nature Conservancy's root beginnings. Most of the people that were there then are dead now. I have wonderful memories as I look back on them. I really didn't realize in those days how fortunate I was when it was actually happening--that this was the beginning and we were having a significant effect at the root beginnings.

I suppose the Santa Monicas, [and the question] of which one started where, is all woven into the fog of the past. I do have some of the names of the early activists. Let's see, I have some letters here.

PITT: It's fine to consult the notes and take all the time you want, but please remember to talk right into the phone, if you will.

JOHNSON: Okay. I look back on names of people that were very active in the [wonderful] obsession that led to the emergence of the Santa Monica Mountains. Certainly, Susan Nelson was wonderfully outspoken, and to her critics irrational, but she and others like her held their ground and I think were very instrumental in the emergence of the idea. Let's see, as I look at the agenda--one correction. I note that on the August 25th six-page fax you forwarded to me . . .

PITT: The chronology?

JOHNSON: The chronology. That I had, as head of the State Resources Agency, appointed Herb Rhodes as director of Parks and Recreation.

PITT: Yes, on the first page there's a definite glitch there, I think.

JOHNSON: Yes. I actually fired him and brought in Russ Cahill.

PITT: Right, I'm sorry. I think it's clarified a little bit on the next page, but I appreciate your correcting it. That's fine.

JOHNSON: However, my state service came later. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with its intense focus really never had a very large membership in Southern California or the Santa Monicas, but it did have a group of close colleagues who were always alert to, and working on, and dreaming up, the emergence of some major preservation condition.

I was with TNC for nine years, and [became uncomfortable with a narrow land focus.] I decided that because of reapportionment--one person, one vote--the shift from the agricultural domination of Congress to an urban domination of Congress was very real, would be very real. And I felt any policy--it could be water policy, park policy, you name it--from now on was going to be decided by urban interests. Whether the people of Los Angeles or Seattle or New York or St. Louis or Miami or Washington wanted would be what would happen, and if you had the misfortune of living in Eureka or Needles, you were not going to have any impact, or a very rare impact, anyway. So I felt the need to take the lessons that we'd enjoyed in those Nature Conservancy years in my wandering around the 13 western states alone. I should add that by the time I left, nine years later, we had more than 50 projects and when I arrived I would think we had 3 or 4, maybe--something like that. The organization had grown and we got into some huge transactions--parks and coastal acquisitions, and other things.

With the reapportionment reality looming [in California], I decided politically it was important to get the lessons, whatever we could offer, to get involved in the urban condition because of this political power implication. Formerly they just let the rural interests have as many Congress-people as Los Angeles [had], wherever they were. So that always had been the emphasis. Well, now clearly that was going to change. Places like Los Angeles were going to get a much larger block in Congress. And that we who knew something about it, had some obsession about environmental quality, had best get involved in the city. Since the only thing I had to offer was this experience in land acquisition, more often in the rural areas than [in the] urban ones. For that reason I started the Trust for Public Land (TPL) [and gave it an urban emphasis]. My objective there had several points: picking up on some experiences. One was transferring the lessons of The Nature Conservancy to the urban scene, and a second was to become very effective professionally in complex transactions. Where you had a corporate holding, or a lot of large parcels [it] was often fraught with frustration. [There were] legal counter-efforts of one type or another. So I started the Trust for Public Land, with the thought that I would (1) add improvements [to the acquisition procedures] and (2) have an urban emphasis. So TPL was launched, and we had many friends. The Nature Conservancy asked me to keep it as a division of The Nature Conservancy, but I felt the importance of a new beginning and took it in [an independent] direction.

Several of our earliest transactions were related to the Santa Monicas. I remember one fascinating one [involved] Lazard Freres, a New York-based law firm and investment operation. [It] was the agent for a large French wine family, the Rothschilds. They had speculated by buying in a particular canyon above Santa Monica, and they were assured

by the sellers they could get permits to put in major real-estate developments. The law firm they used in L.A. advised them to come and talk to me.

Their [New York] attorney, a gentleman named Ben Bartels, arrived in my office and asked, Would we advise him on this. We talked to him. We were probably in business all of a month at the time, and we checked it out, and told him that in our view there wasn't a prayer he was going to have much of a profitable experience in that canyon. The people of Los Angeles were not going to put up with it, and there was a movement under way to preserve the whole landscape. He listened and visited several more times, took us to dinner, and finally we suggested he donate it--that his interests would at least have the advantage of a tax credit for that. They were very wealthy people and we showed him why that would be important. We offered him some incentive, suggesting that if he didn't act fairly quickly, there was always a chance that it would be zoned anyway--it was going to be zoned sooner or later against development. The minute he [publicly announced], we could practically guarantee him that the environmental movement in Los Angeles would rise up and one way or another politically, he would be a loser. So he donated the land, and to our astonishment we ended up with a parcel.

TLP's objective was to acquire difficult, complex parcels. I felt that the tax laws were so generous that a nonprofit acquisition group could have tremendous advantages. So we focused on those advantages in our negotiations. The Trust for Public Land could generally go nose-to-nose with other buyers and beat them. We could show the seller that if the land is worth $10 million, he'll get as much money as if he only asks for $7 million, and then takes $3 million charitable gift. Factors like that could be utilized more efficiently than TNC's normal approval for tax credit. That first Santa Monica transaction worked with these improved, more flexible approaches.

One of the dilemmas of open space preservation was that after we had "saved" a piece of land for a while, the piece enhanced its beauty appeals to developers. Homes adjacent to open space tend to have added value. There is accompanying political pressure for more development and to whittle off more of the preserved space.

I remember one big conflict where the navy wanted to build a hospital in a park in San Diego. We opposed it, but we weren't able to turn them back. So there were always those kinds of things that consumed a lot of energy, too.

At the Trust for Public Land, we tended to have a great ability to use blocks of capital loan fund. On the first effort I went to the Bank of America kind of on a dare. The board and others laughed at the time, but I said, They're a big bank, they've got a lot of money and they ought to loan us some. The experienced voices said, You don't have any collateral, so don't be stupid about this and embarrass us. I went to the bank anyway and managed to get an appointment with the president of the Bank of America. His name was Peterson. I gave him my pitch, and said, "I want to borrow $10 million. I want you to put up $10 million on the table and the money will always be covered by the collateral of the land that we are buying, and we will be getting it at less than market [value]." He looked at me, and asked some questions, and picked up the phone and called in a vice president, his aide, and said, "I want you to arrange to give this gentleman a line of credit for $10 million." [laughter] I did. I came out of there with it. We were all astonished, but our luck was enhanced because I had actually gone fishing with him once, a year or two earlier, in Montana. I was with a party and he had known somebody there. It gave me entree later

that led to that line of credit. We wouldn't have gotten it if we had gone in as TNC. That was an advantage for us in our transactions and negotiations.

The organization is booming at the present time and continues to acquire inholdings and parcels. Our efforts were far more efficient than today's TPL or TNC efforts because no one else was doing it. We got a lot more done for the dollars spent in that area.

On the fifth anniversary, having proven my point, I resigned. I had started it as the founder; [I] was the CEO, and chair of the board. We had managed to accumulate $3 million in cash and $8 million in land assets by being more efficient as a land buyer than the government, and saving an awful lot of land, as well. We would acquire the land and sell it to the government. If we got something for $10 [million] and it was worth $20 [million], we would sell it to the government for $15 [million], and we would use $5 [million] for operations. We saved them half, or whatever the bargain was in getting it. They changed the policy after I left. TLP did other things with their income. They tended to keep all of it in order to grow rapidly.

On the fifth anniversary, having proven my point, I resigned and walked out the door. I hired a consultant to tell me how founders leave organizations. This was a guy who was famous for doing this, and I had known him for years. For one thing, he had been a professor emeritus at the University of Michigan [and his field included corporate sociology]. He said there's a statistical success record on whatever you decide to do. If you decide to stay on the board your chances of being happy and effective are probably 20 percent. If you stay on as chair of the board, although you've left as CEO, they are 10 percent, and he went through [the possibilities]. For instance, a small company president A is being taken over by General Motors. General Motors wants to make sure the little president didn't get in their hair too much and understood the ground rules. They would really try to ease him out, I guess.

My consultant then said there's only one formula that always works, never fails, and that is, you can let yourself accept the fact that you're going to leave. You leave clean and walk out the door and don't look back. You know it's going to change. And that way you remain a friend of the organization and you're free to go out and get on with your life and do whatever it is you want to do. So that was the choice I took. It was kind of fun because I left TPL with the $3 million in cash and $8 million in land, having proved my point. It was a very comfortable fiscal base for the organization and I would have thrived there fiscally had I stayed. It was getting kind of boring. In a sense of art form, five years, I figured was enough and so I accepted Jerry Brown's offer to go to Sacramento.

An hour after I resigned I met with Jerry Brown, whom I had never met personally, at the San Francisco Zen Center. I took David Brower there and we had dinner and exchanged ideas. I subsequently became secretary of Resources. That was a bigger arena [than I had been in before] and I had staff people or colleagues who, one way or another, were actually working on transactions, participating in hearings, planning hearings, maneuvering for budgets, and fending off attempts to influence the mayor or legislative or congressional representatives on the region. It was a very fast pace, so the whole thing is somewhat confusing, as I mentioned when I started this conversation. It's all interwoven, and I'm not really comfortable, because I have never slowed down enough to be precisely clear about which transactions were relevant and which weren't.

I mentioned, for instance, that the parks director, Russ Cahill, was a fellow I brought in. He had been the parks director in Alaska. He was someone I trusted, and I tended as an administrator to delegate responsibility to people I trusted. They would report back in a briefing from time to time and I didn't have to ride hard on them. I had, as I recall, about 12 agencies that reported to me, including Parks, Fish and Game, the Coastal Commission--on their budgets anyway. Water--we were responsible for getting the water from Northern California to Southern California. And each of these agencies was different. Forestry was another one. Oil and Gas. They all had conflicts.

The real sense of that job was that you sat at a desk and the problems that nobody could make a decision about rained down. Every 15 minutes you had a different one, and you would make a decision about it, and then go on to the next one. That was kind of the flow of events. Some were larger than others, of course, and did take more time. Toxic issues were always major conflicts, because the agricultural and chemical industries were so politically powerful.

Anyway, those years went on, and I spent some time in Washington, at hearings, and got wound up in the evolution of those things from time to time. I guess I was particularly close to [Sen. Alan] Cranston and [Rep.] Phil [Phillip] Burton, and the Burton bill, which was this wonderful giant fantasy that worked. It's something I remember putting a lot of time into, and I could almost write a book about that as I got more wrapped up in it.

Among the fun things I remember is a little anecdote. In Santa Monica Jerry Brown had some major contributors, and he was a wonderful governor. Not once did he ever order me to do something that was questionable. But he was so fair.

When I took the job it was starting two years into his administration. He asked me to come in there because the person he had there wasn't doing an adequate job. I accepted but I told him I was not going to stand in line and get his permission for anything. He could fire me at any time but I would be independent. There was a red phone on my desk connected to a red phone was on his desk. That was true of every cabinet officer, so if you wanted to call you just picked it up and it automatically rang. But I noted that there was always a long line of people by his office waiting to talk to him. He tended to be somewhat intrigued with ideas and if he was intrigued with somebody's idea he might stay there all afternoon or night even though he had 20 other appointments. So I just kind of ran my affairs rather independently.

In this case, several of the governor's friends in Santa Monica--I don't recall exactly where it was--were told, I think, we were going to condemn their [property] because they were on leased land. Maybe that was one of the things [wrong with them] or their height. I forget what it was. Russ Cahill, our parks director, was getting hammered by the local L.A. politics. So I did hear the red phone ring, which it rarely did. Jerry Brown said, "I've got some friends who are tragically distraught. Their dream homes were being threatened by Cahill. Can't you just not bother them?" I asked Russ, who was a wonderful classic liberal or something, and Russ said, "Hell, no! We need those houses. Their leases have expired and the public needs access to the beach. We don't like doing it, but if it's for a broad public purpose, in this case for access to the beach, we should condemn them." So I said, "Jerry we're going to condemn them." He just groaned. [laughter] He kind of put his head in his hands and groaned. And we did. He let us get away with it, which is a great compliment to his integrity, I think.

PITT: I [believe it involved] the outlet of [Topanga State Beach], if I recall.

JOHNSON: There were other conflicts, too. It's a rule that when you have a major transaction on lands that are very valuable and are pressed by an urban center, boy, there's a myriad of approaches and dreams and directions, and conflicts about each. We had some shootouts. And on several occasions I had to go down personally and intervene or get involved behind the scenes, or openly.

But I think the reality is that the Santa Monica Conservancy was established and the Park Service was cooperative, more or less. I think if you looked at things in a 25-year framework, the idea has been basically successful and will continue to be. I know that there has been some real passion and conflict over Joe Edmiston, and his having taken on the position [of executive director] as a career. I think most people kind of expect to do a job for a while and move on to something else. That's something Joe didn't do. He worked overtime at the politics of maintaining his position. That I know led to a lot of unhappiness--and still does. None the less, as I look at it, he basically has done an adequate job. The results are there in the Santa Monicas. Running a commission is not an easy task on the best of days. You have appointed boards and endless blueprints in the minds of the commissioners and dreamers and would-be developers and whoever else is out there. So, Dr. Pitt, that in essence is my view of my participation in the Santa Monicas.

PITT: Well, you may be surprised to know--you were thinking maybe you would have about 10 minutes of things to say, but you made it 30 minutes, and it was fine from my point of view. May I ask you a few questions in the remaining half hour?

JOHNSON: Sure.

PITT: Prior to the formation of the [Santa Monica Mountains] Conservancy in 1977 there was a Comprehensive Planning Commission. Howard Berman in the Legislature was the prime mover of that. Did you have any involvement in creating that legislation, which segued into the Conservancy?

JOHNSON: At this stage I vaguely remember involvement. The way my peculiar position worked, I had a staff of legislative assistants, and I just never went over to the Legislature. They would always want to hustle me for some favor, and so I learned to send emissaries. They would report back and we would have several staff meetings a week and each agency would have something going. At the Klamath River there would be two or three Indian tribes in an uproar over their having to restrict salmon fishing that year, or San Diego would be in an uproar because the Tijuana communities' sewage overflow had come down the beach, or whatever. There was a maelstrom of issues.

PITT: So you let others deal with the Legislature. I noticed in talking to some people and looking at the literature that you received, and still receive, very high marks from people in the environmental community, but not such high marks from Sacramento

politicians. [laughter] They considered you impractical, and one of them referred to you as "Mad Huey." I hear you laughing. What's that all about?

JOHNSON: Well, when I arrived, I had in mind what I wanted to accomplish. To succeed required using a little bowl of material called, "Power." Power in the political capitol is what you make of it. The previous secretaries of resources had been severely restricted by their governors. I recall, for instance, Reagan's secretary of Resources, somebody I knew well, Norman Livermore. He said he was normally exhausted because Governor Reagan made him go to a cocktail party every night. He said Reagan was really into the social scene. He said the only time he got any work done was after he'd walk back to his office late at night. It seemed like he spent his years reading material and trying to get permission to do something, which he never got, because those interests who dominated Reagan's immediate surroundings wouldn't let him get to the governor, anyway. Anyway, that would be an example of the kind of problems people had, and I was aware of that. I talked to Livermore before I went to Sacramento, and said, What can I expect? He kindly shared his experiences. So I knew I had to control my own and the agency's time.

Secondly, in the state capitol in Sacramento it's expected that you are one of the boys, and there are functions every night. A labor union will have a big cocktail party, or the next night the garbage collectors of California will. The garbage collectors parties were the grandest of all, by the way. [laughter] The greeters would have big diamond rings and blue suits and I am still awed by the memory of the pile of shrimp on the table. The shrimp must have been about 4-feet high [laughter], and they made political contributions, so that's where these legislative folk would go. There was no cost and no limit on what you wanted to drink. That's how politics is really done, and I just refused to do that. I went to a couple of those things and told the governor that I was not there to make friends with cronies and lobbyists and others, and that I was going to be home for dinner at six o'clock every night. And if they wanted to stay up until 3 a.m., it was fine, but I was going to be home and I wasn't going to those events, and I would be there early in the morning. If I had a long day, I would just come [to work] earlier. That was my mode of operation. I was often at my desk at 7 or 6 or before people got there, but I did make it home for dinner almost every night at 6 o'clock. I used to leave cabinet meetings. I'd get up and walk out.

PITT: So that's the extent of the madness?

JOHNSON: Yes. My values were going to be independent of their expected traditions of being insiders. I would get visits from these folks. This became a real big problem to the governor. So I finally began meeting with these interests on an official basis rather than in conversations at parties. But they wailed and said, "Politics is compromise. You've got to compromise with us." My position was, if there is going to be compromise, you're going to do it. For example, there was a group of interests in forestry I was fighting with, because I wanted them to plant three trees for every tree they cut. We actually got that law passed. The water interests didn't want any restriction. The idea of limits which we were pushing just drove them nuts. They said, "You have to compromise." Again I said, very simply, "No, <u>you</u> have to compromise. My job is to look after the public trust and

trying to recover a healthy environment and if you've got a proposal you tell me about it and I'll consider it. It's going to be unusual when I compromise." Well, they went bananas with that. They were used to manipulating things their way. I was soon called the least-liked person in Sacramento. [laughter] They would come in very humbly, hat in hand and say, "All we need is this bill coming on, on toxic waste. You want it restricted back to 10 parts per million. And we know we can get away with 50 [PPM], so why not 25 [PPM]. You know this is how Sacramento works." I would say, "No." On that one, for three months I refused to sign the documents that they had to have signed in order to get the regulations released. And that [story] is the basis of another book all by itself.

After a couple of years of jousting with them and saying, "Look, I'll be happy to go home. If the governor wants to fire me, that's fine. But I'll take whoever I'm fighting with out with me." After a couple of very intense exchanges the powers that be in Sacramento found that crazy. I was not about to compromise environmental values, and I didn't really care about the job that much. In fact, I told the governor that if I lasted a week, I'd be surprised. Soon, I was astonished to find I had been there a year.

In any event, those were some of the reasons why I was viewed with disfavor by traditional lobby interests and many of the legislative folk. They were paid to get favors done and I didn't like the idea. So they didn't like me.

I think the worst and best example of that was a senator who unfortunately was chair of the Senate Finance Committee, which was a graveyard for ideas. He used to pass me in the hall. After a few months he'd call me up and say, "Johnson, I've got to have your concession on some permit for some utility." They called him, "the Senator from Utilities." The utilities [people] would take him out for lunch every day and fill him up with gin. Consequently, you had to deal with him in the morning, when he was sober I didn't deal with him, period, if I could help it. Once in a while I had to, and I wanted to do it formally and publicly, which he just couldn't handle. So when he'd see me in the hall he'd always swear at me, "You bastard," or "Son of a bitch," or something like that. And I'd say the same thing back to him.

PITT: Let me turn to the Omnibus Bill. You mentioned that you were close to Burton, and also Cranston. Did you go down to Washington, or did you consult directly with Burton on that bill, particularly on the Santa Monicas? I'm thinking also of this: at that time, let's say 1977-78, not everyone in the environmental community was agreed that what Congress ought to do is create a national recreation area for Santa Monica. Many were thinking, Let's make it what they called a "greenline bill," where the federal government will give money to the state and let the state take care of business. That would be one area of debate still going on. So, I'm wondering whether you were directly involved, or whether any or these serious questions came to your attention, and where you came down on them.

JOHNSON: Well, I was involved. In fact I have on my wall a picture that Burton gave me celebrating the bill's passage. I was in Washington on a number of occasions working with him. He was a very powerful man at that time and he didn't really know much about the subject, so he had a handful of people that he leaned on both philosophically and for strategy reasons. I would assume I was one of them. He would call me often, and I would

call him often and we would talk about not just the California issues but some of the broader general regional themes. I would like to tell one story, though.

PITT: I want you to hold that. I've come to the end of this reel. We'll flip it over and you'll start with that. Okay?

JOHNSON: Sure.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: Please, Huey, continue.

JOHNSON: I was going to share with you one anecdote, a war story from those years. Phil Burton was a person of great power, and he was powerful because he used his power. I can remember a cabinet officer actually weeping at a cabinet meeting and turning to Gray Davis who was chairing that cabinet meeting. The fellow was weeping, saying, Gray, I can't get an appointment with the governor and people are going to think I don't have any power. You've got to help me. We all were embarrassed by this. I remember looking at Gray and shaking my head. He thought the same thing, that this guy was really out of it. You had the authority of the office and you had to use it. You had to demonstrate to the audience that if they got in your way they were going to have a problem on their hands, or if they were a friend they were going to be well treated. But you had to set a tone and you had to find what the rules were going to be, and you ran the ship, and anybody who got in your way had problems. So Burton was flat out ruthless in that way. I liked him for it.

I remember one occasion, I went back [to Washington] and I was in a hearing and the opposition was in a frenzy with questions to their friends on the committees. Lobbyists were sending up notes. You sat at a table. I was sitting by myself, with an attorney, with a microphone typical of a hearing and I was the sole participant on some issues. Burton wasn't there yet, and these guys were just chewing on me like dogs trying to chew on a rabbit. Burton came through the back door onto the raised, horse-shoe shaped tribunal and he said, "Ah, my good friend Huey Johnson. Gentlemen, I want to tell you in advance, this is a very close friend of mine, and I do not want anyone cross-examining him unfairly or in a difficult fashion. He is here as my guest and I expect him to be treated courteously, and that goes for all of you." And he sat down. The lobbyists had gotten these guys into a frenzy so they kept it up for a little bit. I'm not bothered by that kind of thing. In that kind of job you are comfortable or you are out of there very quickly.

As the hearing ended Burton said, "Huey, I thank you for coming. I would like you to come with me, if you wouldn't mind." I had never had that happen before, come up to tribunal and go to the back door into the congressional [lobby] where they walk out

into a huge coffee place and all the various congressmen are sitting at tables. He said, "Come I'd like you to meet these guys." The people who had attacked me on the committee were sitting at one table, and he said, "Gentlemen, you may not have met my friend"--they looked kind of sheepish--"and I warned you to treat him fairly, and you didn't." Burton had also asked his aide to come and he said, "John, I want you to take the names of each of these gentlemen and want you to take every possible open space [in their districts] and include them in my Omnibus Bill." These guys were all conservatives from areas that were trying to stay out of the Omnibus Bill, and it was a nasty reverse concept that only someone like Burton would have thought of. And they were just moaning and wailing and saying "Come on Phil, we weren't mean. This guy can take it. Don't do that to us." And they were really, really pleading with him not to do it. [He said,] "Gentlemen, you have earned your problem," and turned and took me and said, "Huey, let's go have a drink." [laughter] So, I got the last laugh on that one, and the word spread.

PITT: Did you have any relationship at that time with [Rep. Anthony C.] Tony Beilenson on the Santa Monicas?

JOHNSON: Conversations, but I did not work closely with him.

PITT: Now, once the bill was passed and the park was set up, Robert Chandler became the first permanent superintendent. I interviewed him and he said that "We didn't have a whole lot of support from Jerry Brown." and he remembers a meeting with Jerry Brown. Chandler says, "I still have a picture where I'm pointing my finger at him encouraging him to be more active in supporting the parks," by which I think he meant the national recreation area. From your perspective was Jerry Brown negligent of the recreation area? What did you think that Chandler wanted that he didn't get?

JOHNSON: Well, Chandler would have liked to have it as a pet issue of the governor. The point is--as [I said] when I started this conversation--you have so many issues just crashing at you all the time, and you have to make decisions, and get on with them. You can't afford to wrap yourself around many of them. Jerry loved the idea of parks, but he delegated the responsibility for them to others--me and, particularly, Cahill. And in order to advance basic themes of governance, you just had to be somewhat business-like. Jerry was a very fine administrator, [though people] didn't believe that or understand that. Being a California governor is a complicated job. You know, I think, people don't appreciate that. In fact, it's been said of the country that one of the problems of the president is that it's impossible to administer [an area] as big as from Key West to Nome, Alaska. California is big and complicated. The economy is huge. At the time I was in office we had a drought we had to wrestle with, and I was responsible for water allocation in many places, getting a pipe over the damned Richmond Bridge to Marin County, so they would have water, and trying to whittle back user groups who didn't want to give up one pint if they could help it. That would be a conflict point. Mono Lake would be another big one. We had the energy crisis at that time. California emerged in the world as a leader in alternative energy management--the beginnings of it. That was something that took a lot of Jerry's time--it took all of our time. So, while the Chandlers

of the world, who had the good fortune of being responsible for a defined context of something, would have wished to have had more support, it was just very hard to indulge them.

PITT: I see. The NRA [National Recreation Area] involved a partnership between the federal and state government. You delegated the authority for the state part of the partnership to whom, to Cahill?

JOHNSON: I delegated it to Cahill. Weekly, my subordinates briefed me behind closed doors on the subjects they were over-seeing. Lake Tahoe, or the coast, or oil and gas policy, whatever. That's kind of what the job involved.

PITT: I was reading a little bit about you in Joseph Engbeck's *History of the State Parks of California*, and he says that when you came into office, you determined you were going to continue supporting urban parks, and protecting wilderness and that was part of bringing in Russ Cahill.[9] Were you thinking about the encouragement of inner city kids experiencing the parks? Were you thinking, therefore, about Los Angeles and the Santa Monicas?

JOHNSON: Yes, for several reasons. The first was fairness. We had traditionally acquired most parks in remote areas. Then, with reapportionment [involving] One Person One Vote in the future, Los Angeles would decide, really decide, all resource policy, and if we didn't involve the inner city we were always going to be vulnerable. We wouldn't have power to achieve anything in the way of environmental quality, or quality of life, for that matter. Parks seemed to me an important asset that people had to learn they owned part of just by the mere fact that they were citizens. It was a matter of shared trust. There was a shared heritage they had with those who had been fortunate enough to live outside the large cities and had far better access to other parks. I was raised in a small town and was a kind of post-Depression child, worked my way through school in the earliest years, and appreciated the importance this extra dimension [could make] in people's lives, especially if they understood that they had a share in something.

To this day every urbanite in San Francisco and L.A. owns more than two acres of the public land, that is, if you divide the number of federal acres there are in the country by the number of citizens. And that is a remarkable asset. There's no comparison for it in the world, really. The residents of Los Angeles have never understood [the need to] get our large urban centers more involved in appreciating this public trust asset they have. The park systems generally are at great risk. I had always loved parks. Long before I ever took a job in California, I had inherently enjoyed parks and wilderness. I figured that was why I had left the corporate world--that it was more important for me to be involved in that sector. I used to go to Washington to campaign for the National Park Service budget in the early years and help them other ways when I was working for The Nature Conservancy. I don't do that any more because I am less happy with the National Park Service, the way they function. But I just did have a passion and do have a passion about the importance of parks as a way for people to begin to understand the environment and

[9] Joseph H. Engbeck, Jr., *State Parks of California from 1864 to the Present* (1980).

[how] the quality of their lives is bound into that, whether it's water, farm soil, air, forests, fisheries and other natural features**.**

PITT: Now from time to time, Southern California environmentalists and grassroots people complained that Northern Californians—meaning, I gather, San Franciscans and Sacramento people--were indifferent to the problems of Southern California and indifferent to the Santa Monica Mountains simply because those mountains were in the southern part of the state. Is this a fair criticism?

JOHNSON: I think so. I think here in those years the environmental movement was all wound up in things like wilderness legislation or Redwood National Park, or coastal issues and there has always been an inherent schism between Northern California and Southern [California]-San Francisco and Los Angeles, I should say. People in the north to this day don't appreciate the Santa Monicas.

PITT: Did I hear you mention that you did have some conversations with Tom Bradley regarding the Santa Monicas, or some other Southern California issue?

JOHNSON: Yes, he was a very, very pleasant fellow. He listened. As I recall we had a very positive relationship.

PITT: Did you have some connection with the formation of the TreePeople and with Andy Lipkis.

JOHNSON: Well, I'm not sure, but in their early beginnings, I discovered them and really enjoyed knowing them. I used to stay with them when I was in L.A., just to get away, when I was secretary of Resources. It was great fun to stay at their house, just hole up there, and reminisce and think about forests and their needs. These were fantastic kids, one of the links into the urban center who would create awareness that would lead to the political vote. Again, if we don't have the political vote of Los Angeles to support environmental policy, it's not going to happen. So I figured Lipkis and the TreePeople were a wonderful device to support the directions we were heading in.

PITT: Still going strong here, too.

JOHNSON: Great.

PITT: When I interviewed Ray Murray--he's now in the National Park Service and he was back then with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation--he remembered that the Trust for Public Land people, meaning you and a Greg Archibald, came to him and asked for advice about which land to purchase for parks and when they suggested the Santa Monicas his people turned over some quad sheets to the Trust. It evolved into an acquisition in Cheeseboro Canyon. Do You recollect that?

JOHNSON: Yes, I recollect vaguely.

PITT: Do you have any specifics?

JOHNSON: I don't.

PITT: This may have happened after you were with the Trust, but the transfer of land occurred in such a way that the price of the land went very high and the Trust had to pay an inordinate price for it. And there may have been some litigation. But if that doesn't ring a bell with you, it must have come later.

JOHNSON: Is Ray still there?

PITT: Ray is with the National Park Service and [is] stationed in San Francisco. Maybe you can chew that one over [with him]. I think I asked you about the greenline park. Do I gather from your answer that you were not particularly caught up in the debate as to whether it should be a greenline park or a national recreation area?

JOHNSON: No. I was on record favoring national recreation areas at that time. I made the same proposals for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

PITT: Oddly enough both Ronald Reagan and Jerry Brown lived for a time in the Santa Monica Mountains, but as far as you know did Brown have any special awareness of that environment, of the surroundings, of the politics of the west side?

JOHNSON: Yes. He was a very astute politician. He had been on a board of education originally, in his political career, and was aware of the problems of having a police force of integrity, and a whole range of other issues. The way to judge him was he always supported whatever I wanted, and that is the sign of a good executive. Had he started dabbling in one of those [roles] he would have gotten trapped by the Park Service, or somebody else, which is what happened to Reagan and others. It would probably happen to us all from time to time. With public policy you've got a full spectrum of issues to choose from all the time. You tend, probably, in a specialized area to treat the ones you like and let the rest of them go.

PITT: And as you say, he did delegate a great deal to you.

JOHNSON: It would be fair to say [that] for any of the problems for which I was responsible, I had the freedom and the power to carry out policies and I did that to the best of my ability. But there would certainly be shortfalls, and I would be responsible [for them] more so, than the governor.

PITT: I want to point out that it's exactly one hour. Can we just go for another few?

JOHNSON: Well, a few. I've got a couple of phone calls I must make. It doesn't seem over these years that the pace of my life has slowed up any and for that reason I rarely look back. In fact, I've always turned down opportunities to have oral histories done, for the same reason you've had trouble cornering me. I just realized I never cared much

about the details of the event at the time they occurred. I always had a dozen balls in the air. The details of them I leave to historians if they are important enough to keep track.

PITT: I will ask you one last question--unless you have something to say--I would ask you this. I have read your *Green Plans,*[10] and you write very forcefully and eloquently about protecting sustainable environments. If I am concerned about this one rare biome of the Santa Monica Mountains, and this one place that's so important for recreation and preservation of wildlife, what needs to be done to protect and sustain the open space, the wildlife, the rarity of the Santa Monica Mountains?

JOHNSON: In order to save the Santa Monica Mountains--the same thing that would be done to save much of the landscape bordering on the large cities of the West Coast. And that is to realize, that these are public lands, and most of them aren't as visible or as obviously a part of potential immediate life for the residents as the Santa Monicas. But the Santa Monica Mountains provide a vehicle of awareness, a political awareness, so that people understand this is a doorway to a vast treasure, to a place called the public landscape of America. And all the Sierras and all the deserts and whatever are there, they can go up and camp and hike and do whatever they can do. I [would] argue that one of our [gaps] is that we have not really involved people in the inner cities. If I were doing it again, I would have 50 buses leaving every Saturday morning from downtown Los Angeles loaded with teenage children who would be going up, and they would be cutting chaparral. They would be managing the landscape above L.A. because of fire conditions. They would be going up and replanting trees higher in the Sierras, and would be paid for it.

It would be [like] a condition I observed in Austria, actually, long ago and far away. I bummed around the world when I got out of college and dropped out of corporate America (although I always did a very good job there and succeeded at a high level). I noted that the Austrians had been very wise in some of these towns. They involved their children in managing and being concerned for the land. The little kids picked up twigs, the larger kids might have picked up branches and the teens sawed some logs for fire wood, or whatever it was, or replanted trees. But there was a sense of involvement with the land and that sustained them with this value system reinforced constantly for hundreds of years. You can pick it up best, I suppose, by going to the Vienna Woods above Vienna, Austria. You go there and the place is immaculately kept, and the retirees and young people in the community for centuries have been going up there. If there's a little erosion riffle all of a sudden they'll come up and put up a shallow metal eave, or eave trough, across the road, so that it doesn't erode any more. And they reforest and they do log it on a controlled basis. It's wonderful to see the community of Vienna involved with the Vienna Woods and the best result of that.

There's a beautiful story that illustrates this point about the value of culture and mountains, albeit the Santa Monicas or the Sierras, or in this case, the Vienna Woods. World War II was coming to an end, the fighting was bitter in Vienna. Crack German troops were retreating house by house and the Allies were fighting them. The [electric] power was out, it was winter, and finally the place was cleared of the German Army. The

[10] Huey Johnson, *Green Plans: Greenprint for Sustainability* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1995).

American commander issued a directive that power was out and, as there was no heat, the public should feel free to pick up wood. But the people of Vienna did not pick up one stick in the Vienna Woods. I had a friend--or a fellow who became a friend--who said he was an officer in a prison camp in the suburbs of Vienna when that happened. He got up and told an audience, "The Germans had left, so we didn't have guards, whoever they were--they were Poles or something or other. So they figured it was best to stay there until somebody came, and offer some positive direction for them. The first visitors were citizens from the city of Vienna, who came and said, 'Don't anybody in this camp pick up a stick of wood from that forest. This is our culture, our heritage, and we're going to put on more sweaters and whatever it's going to take. We're not going to burn that wood.' So that was what happened." And that's the cultural role that urban parks like the Santa Monicas can deliver.

PITT: Wonderful story.

JOHNSON: That was an example of a culture being woven into the land, and ultimately, one way or another, that's still a great task, I think, for the state and nation. We have a treasure in these landscapes that belong to the public--two acres per person today, or more than that--and we ignore that involvement in the Santa Monicas. The very conflict of giving birth to that and the struggle to establish the area bit-by-bit and piece by-piece and the disagreements between Joe [Edmiston], and Susan [Nelson], and everybody else, are all healthy parts of it and create awareness. Anytime you get press [coverage] and they spell it right it's exciting and positive.

But we've never gotten to the maturity stage where we understand that we could manage that chaparral so it doesn't burn Los Angeles all the time, and we could do it best by citizens of Los Angeles, just as the people of Vienna did it. You've got to have a budget, and a plan, and you've got to do things with chaparral. We could just chop it up and make briquettes out of it, and use it for energy sources elsewhere. There are ways to do that. It doesn't have to burn, you can crop it and cut it by hand and an awful lot of people could be involved in doing that. In the chaparral landscapes of California, every major city is backed by them. So that's the Santa Monica's story.

PITT: Well, that's a fascinating response. It's been a pleasure talking to you, and thank you very much indeed for this extremely interesting interview.

JOHNSON: And thank you very much for your persistence. Okay!

End of Side B

End of Interview

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THE BIRTH OF CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

An Interview with Robert J. Lagomarsino

Former Congressman Robert J. Lagomarsino of Ventura was interviewed on July 12, 1999, at the headquarters building of the National Park Service in Thousand Oaks, California.

Interviewee: Robert J. Lagomarsino
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: We've established that we're going to call each other Bob and Len. Okay?

LAGOMARSINO: Okay. That's fine.

PITT: Would you please tell us briefly about your personal background growing up in Ventura, your education, how you entered politics, how long you served in Congress.

LAGOMARSINO: I was born in Ventura, as was my father. His father came here from Italy in the late 1800s, 1890 something. His family lived here, my dad and his two sisters and two brothers. As I say, I was born here, went to local schools. In World War II, I enlisted in the navy, was gone for a couple of years, came back and attended the University of California at Santa Barbara. I then entered the University of Santa Clara Law School in 1950, graduated, got a law degree and started practicing law in Ventura.

In 1961, at the dare of my then wife, I ran for the Ojai City Council. For whatever reason, and I don't even remember why, I had wanted to serve on the Planning Commission. I don't remember that I even made a serious effort to get there. In any event, I was not appointed to the Planning Commission. I was complaining about that one time, and my wife said, "Well, why don't you run for the Council then?" and I said, "I will." And much to my surprise, and everybody else's, I was elected. I was considered somewhat of a Young Turk, I guess, at the time.

Later that same year, this was 1961, before the end of the year, the fellow who had been the mayor stepped down and I was elected mayor. I was the mayor of Ojai for about three years. In 1961 the then state senator, a Democrat named Jim McBride, who had been in office for nearly 30 years as state senator from Ventura County--a real good guy, very popular and a friend of our family, my dad's especially--died in office. Some of my friends said, Why don't you run for the state Senate in a special election? And I did. And the fellow who had been the state assemblyman for quite a few years, ran. There was a lot of discontent with him. The Democratic district attorney, another friend of mine, ran also. They split the vote and I won with about 34 percent of the vote. That's before they changed the law, because of my election, to require a run-off. [laughter] So if there had

been a run-off I probably wouldn't have won. But at any rate I did. Let's see, that was '61. I was re-elected in '64, in '66, and in '70.

In 1974 Congressman Charles Teague represented Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. As a matter of fact, he only represented the parts that were not heavily Democrat because of a gerrymander that had been drawn, in that case, in his favor. I probably wouldn't even have run if that hadn't been the case because it would have been a very tough race to win. As a matter of fact, it turned out to be. I barely did win. But I did. I was elected in a district that was just about evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, unlike the Senate district I had which was heavily Democratic. This one was about even. I won some 53 percent of the vote.

In the meantime, the new reapportionment plan went into effect that took out, for example, this area, put in Oxnard which I didn't have--heavily Democratic--put back in Isla Vista in Santa Barbara County which was heavily Democratic, as well. But I won by 56 percent that time because times had changed. That was during Watergate. I suppose if Nixon hadn't resigned, I don't know what would have happened, because either way, I voted on impeachment; if it ever came to that, I would have been in trouble, at least according to our poll. But anyway, I was re-elected and all the times until the primary of 1992 when Michael Huffington defeated me with $3 1/2 million. [laughter]

But one of the high points of my service in the Congress was the establishment of the Channel Islands National Park. Just as the building here [indicating where this interview is taking place] is named the Anthony C. Beilenson Visitors Center, the visitors center there is named after me.

PITT: That's nice.

LAGOMARSINO: I don't know about that, but I'm sure proud of it.

PITT: And the parallels between this park and Channel Islands is why I've been asked to do an interview with you. I'll put it this way: These two parks, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Channel Islands National Park may not be joined at the hip but they're sort of kissing cousins.

LAGOMARSINO: Right. And they were joined at the hip apparently when the islands were connected to the mainland.

PITT: Right. Before the water.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Before the water. And they were also connected in that they were both very much--what's the word? Well, [Phillip] Phil Burton was very much responsible for both.

PITT: So from a political point of view also?

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Right.

PITT: They grow out of the same era. One is within a couple of years of the other.

LAGOMARSINO: And I think in a way they were a typical political thing. It was kind of a trade-off in a way. Not that he didn't think they were both very deserving of the status they acquired, but he had a chance to do something for me, although as I say, I was a pretty conservative Republican and he was probably the most liberal Democrat in the Congress at that time. At the same time, he could do something for his friend Tony. Because Barry Goldwater [Jr.] and I had introduced legislation concerning the Santa Monica Mountains, and I don't think he was about to do anything for Barry Goldwater.

PITT: You know what I'd like to do, Bob. I'd like to start in the state Legislature phase.

LAGOMARSINO: Okay.

PITT: Then we'll come right up to the point that you were just talking about now, in the Congress. When you served in the state Senate from 1961 to 1974, were you involved in any of the legislation concerning parks?

LAGOMARSINO: Yes, I was, although I don't remember many of the details. But, for example, during some of that time--and I've forgotten the exact years--I was the chairman of the Senate Natural Resources, Wildlife and Water Committee, until I was elected to the Senate Rules Committee. So I had quite a bit to do with those kinds of issues, and also, I guess related in a way, I introduced legislation which nobody thought would become law, creating an oil-drilling free sanctuary around the Channel Islands which was signed into law by then Governor Reagan which surprised some people that he would do that. But he did.

PITT: Yes. An excellent piece of legislation. Now in 1972 the Legislature established a Ventura-Los Angeles Mountain and Coastal Study Commission, and after that came [Rep.] Howard [L.] Berman's Ventura-Los Angeles Mountain and Coastal Zone Act of 1973 [after] which the Commission did a two-year plan for this park and for this area down here. I don't know whether the Channel Islands were included in that one. But I was wondering if you had anything to do with that legislation?

LAGOMARSINO: I probably did, but I sure don't recall it.

PITT: You know, it's interesting. When I interviewed Tony Beilenson about the things that went on with respect to the parks and parklands in Southern California when he was in the Legislature--and I sent him one of those chronologies [such as I sent you]--he said that he was interested to learn for the first time, upon getting my chronology, of all the things that had been going on in the years that he was in Sacramento.

LAGOMARSINO: Well, me too. I had a similar reaction.

PITT: There was plenty going on but his personal involvement was maybe more focused in some other direction.

LAGOMARSINO: Let's see, I'm trying to remember. Well, during much of that time this area where the recreation area is now was not in my district, so I was not as focused on it as I would have been otherwise. But in Congress, it was again, although it did change. But it was still in Ventura County. Although I must say, I don't think it's surprising for me to say this, I was more interested in the Channel Island part of it. My involvement with the mountain area was pretty much with Barry Goldwater. He was the primary author of the bill that I co-sponsored.

PITT: Now at that time there was a great controversy and collision over private land developers.

LAGOMARSINO: Right.

PITT: They wanted to develop the Santa Monica Mountains and the grassroots organizations and property owners, and so on, getting together to try and resist it. And out of that came the move for the National Recreation Area.

LAGOMARSINO: Right.

PITT: Did that same dynamic, that same collision of forces, work from your viewpoint, in Ventura County?

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Although not nearly as intensive. Today it would be, I suppose, if we were going through the same thing. But then it was not as much. There was some of it, but there was more from Los Angeles County.

And there was--at least it started with--a great deal of controversy. There wasn't so much controversy about doing something, and even spending a lot of money to do it. But there was some controversy about who should do it. Whether it should be the state or the federal government. Or a combination. And Barry Goldwater's bill, as I recall, was a sort of a combination. The feds would put up the money but it would be turned over to the state or some regional body to operate.

PITT: So you were elected to Congress in 1974 and served until 1993.

LAGOMARSINO: Right.

PITT: And you sat on the House Interior Committee and the National Parks Subcommittee. Is that correct?

LAGOMARSINO: I served on the Foreign Affairs Committee from the time I entered Congress. Then there was a vacancy on the House Merchant Marine Committee and I filled that one until after the next election, eight months later. So starting in 1975 I went on the Interior Committee. And during all of that time I was on the committee, I was a member of the subcommittee that had "National Parks" in the name.

PITT: Now as I recall, Congressman [Charles] Teague of Ventura had introduced in 1972 a bill for Toyon National Park in the Santa Monica Mountains. Perhaps it also included something about the Channel Islands, although I believe not. No hearings were held on that, and the bill died.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. He was not really a big fan of the National Parks taking over the islands and probably, at that time, I wasn't either because there didn't seem to be any real danger. The owners were doing a fine job of protecting them. In fact, that's one of the ironic things. Because they did such a good job of preserving them that there was something there to preserve. They could have easily become another Catalina. Easily.

PITT: So you say that you worked with Rep. Goldwater. In January, 1977, you and Goldwater, I believe, introduced [a bill]--I have it as House Representatives [HR] 380--for Santa Monica Mountains Urban Park. Is it right to think that this one was the combination of state and federal partnership?

LAGOMARSINO: I think so. The bill will speak for itself, but I know that's more or less what Barry had in mind.

PITT: And how far did this bill get?

LAGOMARSINO: Not very far.

PITT: But in 1978 the subcommittee with Phil Burton began to discuss it. It was folded into his package?

LAGOMARSINO: That's correct.

PITT: Could you tell us a little bit more about your connection with Phil Burton?

LAGOMARSINO: Let me say this. There's a book which you may have read.

PITT: By Jacobs?

LAGOMARSINO: John Jacobs. Have you read his book, *A Rage for Justice*?

PITT: I did. Yes. Tell me what you think of the book.

LAGOMARSINO: Well, I think the book is very accurate, especially the parts where he talks about me and relates some of my relationships with Phil Burton.

PITT: I was going to ask you [about that].

LAGOMARSINO: Really. That's true. The story that he tells in there about the bills I had in the Assembly Criminal Procedures Committee and how he said at the hearing finally after--it was a long story--but after he finally said, "Well, I had two dances,"--

referring to my wife--"the night before. I'll move two bills out." [laughter] That is a true story. I had known him before that, but not very well. And after that I realized that if I was going to get anything done in that subcommittee, and that was something I was very interested in--the criminal justice system--I carried a lot of bills for the district attorneys in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, and also for the District Attorneys Association of the state. And I knew that unless I talked to Phil Burton first, there was no point in even trying to get them passed in the Assembly. So I did. On a subsequent occasion I went to talk to him. And I had, on the one that we were talking about just now, I think I had seven bills there. Ended up with two of them. The next time I think I had, oh, 13 or 14. I got half of them passed which amazed everybody. Some were actually signed into law later.

PITT: He was a pretty amazing politician, was he not?

LAGOMARSINO: Absolutely. In fact he--I'm not saying this for the first time--he probably knew more about reapportionment and members' districts than they did, politically. It was incredible. And he also knew how members should vote in their district, and he would tell members that, even sometimes if it meant that they would vote against his position. Not if it would cause him to lose, but he didn't care as long as he got what he wanted. And when he didn't, that was something else. That only happened about once that I can recall. [laughter] He usually got what he wanted. But we were very, oh, I don't know, close is not the right word, but we spent a lot of time together.

PITT: You certainly respected one another.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Yes. And I know that he respected me and liked me. Oh, I mean, the bill wouldn't have passed otherwise. In fact, Tony Beilenson had a bill for the Channel Islands. He could easily have passed that one.

PITT: I was going to get to that. Is it true that he backed off [when] Tony Beilenson introduced the bill, and then backed off in deference to you?

LAGOMARSINO: Well, I don't know if it was that clear cut. But that's the effect of what happened anyway. Well, for example, in Tony's, with all deference to him, his bill never got to the point where it was heard but people were discussing various things. But his went far beyond mine. In fact, it put some land in Santa Barbara County along the coast, in a national park, which maybe should have been done. But not then.

PITT: We're talking now, I believe, in the spring of 1977, Beilenson's Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Islands National Park and Seashore Act which is H.R. 7264. Hearings were held but the bill died. And that's what we're dealing with here.

LAGOMARSINO: I think that's right. And I don't recall how far the hearings went, or whether they included that part of his bill at that point.

PITT: But after that he backed off and you picked up the ball on Channel Islands.

LAGOMARSINO: I'm not sure if that's the right way to put it, but that's what happened. He either backed off or Phil backed him off. I don't know.

PITT: Now your relations with Beilenson were cordial.

LAGOMARSINO: Oh, yes. Very much so. My wife Norma and I considered Tony and Dolores Beilenson to be close personal friends in Sacramento and Washington.

PITT: Even though you were on a different side of the aisle.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. And, again, I've often said about him, that even if you didn't agree with him you knew what he was doing was from conviction. He was, I think, one of the most honest people who ever served in the Congress.

PITT: Really.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes.

PITT: Now when it came to environmental matters, was there serious disagreement between the two of you?

LAGOMARSINO: I disagreed with his bill, because I don't think it did some of the things that needed to be done. For example, as I recall and I might be wrong about this, but I think he gave part of the ownership of the waters around the island to the National Park Service. I did not. I wanted those to remain under state jurisdiction and have co-operation, and it's worked out fairly well.

I don't know that his bill took into account the national defense matters that were going on. On Santa Cruz Island the radar towers. And also at that time, the navy ownership of San Miguel, which is still the case. It turned out, at least in the early years of the park, to be a very good thing for the Park System because, among other things, it allowed the Park Service to call on the navy to transport things back and forth, which they couldn't have done if they didn't own it probably. Or at least it would have been more difficult. But those were the only kind of disagreements we had.

The House, I should say, was never a big problem. Although it was obviously a problem getting any major bill passed. But the Senate was much more difficult because they really got into the question of who was going to own what, and the rights of landowners, and whose property was included in the park. And some of the owners who had supported the bill in the House backed down a little bit, or at least had questions about it. As it turned out it was probably for the better because of that. Because California Senator S.I. Hayakawa, who was in the Senate then, put a requirement in the bill that Santa Rosa Island be acquired first. It was the largest island and certainly the largest private ownership. We wanted to acquire the eastern end of Santa Cruz Island first because that was the part they wanted to develop for camping, and so on. It didn't turn out that way, but as it turned out it was probably okay.

PITT: Now in this park, toward Los Angeles and in the bordering area in Ventura, the grassroots organizations have been very important.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Very important.

PITT: Even before the park was established and the state parks were being developed and land was being reclassified. Which grassroots organizations came into your purview?

LAGOMARSINO: Not very many. In fact, I don't recall that any of them were that involved. I'm sure they all supported it and some wanted something more like Tony's bill than mine, but . . .

PITT: I'm speaking now of the Sierra Club, Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore, thinking about the homeowners associations.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. But it's certainly true that there was a lot more support locally--or more activism for . . .

PITT: Here. For this park.

LAGOMARSINO: . . . this one than for that one. Yes.

PITT: I see. What was your reaction finally, when the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area was established in 1978? Did you support it?

LAGOMARSINO: Sure. I had some question, and I guess still do. I haven't followed that closely--as to whether it should have been a national recreation area or some other thing. I think that in some ways the National Park Service--and I was part of it, I voted for a lot of those bills--has expanded so far to the extent that now it's difficult for them to maintain things the way they should be, and operate them the way they should be.

PITT: Maybe that's what Robert Chandler was thinking about when he said that--I'm looking for his exact words and I'm not finding them at the moment--but it was something like, that you supported the park half-heartedly, but you supported it, whereas he could never be too sure about Goldwater.

LAGOMARSINO: I don't know.

PITT: Goldwater was a wild card, was quote unquote, from Robert Chandler.

LAGOMARSINO: Was what?

PITT: He said that Goldwater was a wild card.

LAGOMARSINO: Wild card. Okay.

PITT: Meaning that he could not predict where Goldwater would be on a particular say, land acquisition or policy about the park. But he said that you supported, but you were, I'm paraphrasing now, half-hearted. What do you think about that?

LAGOMARSINO: Like I just said, I had some questions about whether it should have been a national recreation area. I thought it should be preserved, at least to some extent. To buy everything within the park boundaries, even with the big surplus they have now, would be tough to do. And whether that's even necessary. I wouldn't disagree too much with that. About half, but it might be more than half. [laughter]

PITT: Okay. We won't quibble over a fraction.

LAGOMARSINO: I certainly would not put myself in the same category of supporter as Tony Beilenson or Berman for that matter. Or Phil. I don't know if Phil had a--I don't know. I shouldn't even guess at that because I never really heard him talk much about it. And I take it to some extent it was a political thing with him. Political not being bad, but just recognizing who supports what and who doesn't.

PITT: I have found the exact words. "Guardedly supportive," was Chandler's characterization of you. And maybe you have explained that.

LAGOMARSINO: I don't know.

PITT: Okay. By 1978 the Santa Monica Park was established.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. My recollection was--I guess I'm wrong--that they were both done at the same time? That they were both in the same bill? But I . . .

PITT: But for some reason, yours was not actually passed in 1978.

LAGOMARSINO: Mine wasn't passed until 1980. Because I was there when Phil Burton called the White House. I don't remember who he talked to. It wasn't the president. Jimmy Carter was the president. And Burton had to promise, or so he said and that's what I heard on his end of the conversation, that we would not ask for any money if he signed the bill into law. I can't imagine the president, Carter, wouldn't. But that's what they said, so we had to promise that we wouldn't ask for any money. Of course, we couldn't get it anyway that year, so that was no big deal.

PITT: So it really does come from the same political dynamic, although yours came later.

LAGOMARSINO: Mine was, as I recall, Title II of the Omnibus [Parks] Bill of that year, so apparently there were two omnibus bills.

PITT: You must have felt pretty terrific, though, by the time it happened.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. They were considered together. I think the same dynamics. I was surprised to see your [chronology]--to remember, I guess, that they weren't in the same bill. I just always remembered they were.

PITT: We're talking about the time when both parks are established. Was there a rivalry, say, for funding the Channel Islands and Santa Monica?

LAGOMARSINO: To some extent, I guess, because every dollar that goes some place is a dollar that can't go somewhere else. And there is also--you'd have to ask them--but I think there was a feeling that the Channel Islands were more national park quality than were these mountains. At least that was the perception.

PITT: From a traditional point of view.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Right. And also that the amount of money for what was going to be acquired there was much less because we were going to acquire one island. Everybody figured that would be $30 or $40 million, and part of another one had to be another $15 or $20 million. And that's it.

PITT: Compared to maybe $120 million or more. Those were the figures that were talked about in terms of the Santa Monica [Mountains].

LAGOMARSINO: In fact, the figure that I recall and I don't remember whether this was actually spelled out, but we were talking about probably something like $75 million. I think this is what Goldwater was trying to get. That would be the authorization. Of course, that was a long, long time ago, and that's equivalent to probably two or three times that much today. As a matter of fact, that's what it turned out to be with part of the Channel Islands National Park. They acquired the eastern end of Santa Cruz Island in four different quarters and they paid $4 million for three of the quarters, and then one brother went to court and ended up getting $12 million for his share. Something like that.

PITT: Now in the Reagan years--Reagan as president--Interior Secretary James Watt wanted to kill all of the national recreation areas if he could manage it.

LAGOMARSINO: Slowly to turn them back over to the states.

PITT: Turn them over to the states [and] disassemble them from federal control.

LAGOMARSINO: Right.

PITT: What was your reaction to that?

LAGOMARSINO: Well, I knew it wasn't going to happen, for one thing. I shared some of the concern about it, as I said earlier, about adding some of these things, but I think it was overkill to try to send them back.

PITT: Ronald Reagan actually lived within the boundaries of the National Park.

LAGOMARSINO: Not when he was president.

PITT: When he was governor?

LAGOMARSINO: I guess, yes, he probably did then. But then he bought the ranch in Santa Barbara County and that was his official residence. I know because I was his congressman.

PITT: Did you ever have a conversation with him about the mountains and about parkland in Southern California? Did he have any commitments on that score? On Channel Islands or anything?

LAGOMARSINO: I didn't directly with him. I did with some of his people, especially about oil-drilling and about funding for Channel Islands. But I don't recall ever talking to the president directly about it.

PITT: I know that people in Ventura have a tremendous sensitivity to excessive urban growth and the destruction of open land and of farm land, and they would come down on the side of slow growth if not on no growth.

LAGOMARSINO: Right.

PITT: What's your take on this?

LAGOMARSINO: Well, I think again that the passing of the initiative, the so-called SOAR initiative [Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources] initiative which was, they say, designed to help farmers--they finally abandoned that because I think only one or two farmers in the whole county publicly supported it. I think, again, that that was overkill, the wrong way to do it. But, you know, that's what people wanted. They voted for it about two to one. What a lot of people don't realize is that--maybe some realized it and didn't care or thought they'd be able to take care of it later--it will just tremendously increase growth inside of the cities and take farmland which is there. And I think a lot of people voted for that initiative thinking it would preserve that farmland on which it has no effect.

PITT: Has that affected the part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area that's in Ventura County as far as you can tell?

LAGOMARSINO: I don't think so. Because I can't imagine anybody thinking that any of the land in the national park would be able to be developed anyway. Or at least certainly not in the traditional way.

PITT: Now there are people who have known about this park from the beginning and they will talk about land in L.A. County having been developed and overdeveloped since

1978. In fact, I think Tony Beilenson says that when he comes through here now he sees so much more development than he would have imagined in 1978. Is that your perception of how it is over on that side, too?

LAGOMARSINO: Oh, yes. Places like Moorpark, which was just a crossroads, is now very heavily developed, although in a pretty tasteful way. It's well done. But that's certainly not unique to this area. San Diego. All over.

PITT: Growing up in Ventura as a kid, you must have been conscious of the mountains.

LAGOMARSINO: Oh, sure.

PITT: And the wildlife.

LAGOMARSINO: Of course.

PITT: And the parks and the islands.

LAGOMARSINO: And I liked it much better then.

PITT: It was in your blood from childhood. And you liked it better then.

LAGOMARSINO: Oh, sure. Of course.

PITT: Were you a hiker and a camper, and that sort of thing?

LAGOMARSINO: Early on. And I owned horses, and hunting and fishing, camping. I still do some of that, but not like it was. I visited the islands many times. One of my really good friends, Cary Stanton, owned Santa Cruz Island. He made the park possible because he's the one who entered into a deal with The Nature Conservancy to buy, I've forgotten how many acres, and then an option to buy the rest of it on his death. He did a tremendous job of preserving the place. My brother and a friend of his had the hunting concession there for pigs and wild sheep. And he would go absolutely almost out of his head if somebody threw a gum wrapper out on the ground. That sort of thing.

PITT: That was 20 years ago--1978, 1979.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes, that's right. It's 20 years ago. It's hard to believe.

PITT: Twenty years and we've seen certain changes. We've seen, as you've just said, overdevelopment in many places. What do you foresee in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in the next 20 years?

LAGOMARSINO: I think there will not be nearly as much change in the area--within the boundaries of the area--as there is elsewhere. I think that more property will be acquired by the federal government. I have no idea how much more.

And there are some things that Congress could do, and I tried to do when I was there but it wasn't successful. For example, as far as I know the law has never been changed so that if someone who owns property in a national park, a national recreation area, anything of that kind, dies, the estate taxes become payable in nine months and they cannot pay that by giving part or all of their property to the government. That's just plain silly and cruel, too. And that was what almost happened to people who owned part of the Channel Islands National Park.

PITT: So you introduced some legislation?

LAGOMARSINO: Well, we talked about it. I don't know if we ever got to the point of actually introducing legislation. We certainly were considering it.

PITT: Do you have a recollection of working with Margot Feuer of the Sierra Club?

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Yes.

PITT: And of Sue Nelson of the Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes.

PITT: Can you relate any conversations you had, or dealings that you had?

LAGOMARSINO: No. I mean, if somebody told us something, I could probably recall, but I don't have an independent recollection. I know that I worked with them and knew them for quite a while.

PITT: Were there corporations and/or individual owners of property who appealed to you specifically?

LAGOMARSINO: On this?

PITT: On this one. Yes.

LAGOMARSINO: No. Not that I recall. But on the other hand I don't know that they would have sought me out as much as the people who actually represented them.

PITT: But they could have been in Ventura County?

LAGOMARSINO: Could. Yes.

PITT: But they didn't necessarily. You don't recall exchanges with them.

LAGOMARSINO: Of course, most of what was in Ventura County was state park [land]. The development in this area was not nearly as intensive as it is now. In fact, it wasn't long before then where Thousand Oaks is--I remember very clearly when I first

ran for the state Senate--it had Jungle Land, the lions, and Rock House restaurant. That was about it. That wasn't so long ago.

PITT: Tony Beilenson and others have said that if the county supervisors had done their work correctly over the years in preserving open land and wildlife, and so on, we wouldn't have had to have a national recreation area.

LAGOMARSINO: Well, I suppose that's true. Well, that is true. No question about it. But it's easier said than done. I mean, people have to live some place, and there are a lot of choice living places. But it is true that a lot of things were developed that probably should not have been, even without hindsight.

PITT: Although people do say that the Ventura County supervisors did better in that respect than did the L.A. [supervisors].

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. And part of that is, Look and don't do what they did. In fact, one of the reasons I was opposed to the SOAR initiative was because I felt that the Board of Supervisors had done, and were doing, a brilliant job.

PITT: Can you tell us anything more about Barry Goldwater, or is that something you've already answered?

LAGOMARSINO: The which?

PITT: About Barry Goldwater, Jr. [Something] that we should understand about him and this park?

LAGOMARSINO: He is the one who asked me to join him as a co-sponsor of this bill. When did he leave Congress?

PITT: I don't know.

LAGOMARSINO: I don't remember either. I should. We actually lived in their house for a while, for several months, when we first moved to Washington. And his ex-wife is my wife's best friend.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: Please continue. I had asked you a question.

LAGOMARSINO: Yes. Well, anyway, I was just saying that we lived in their house for several months while we were buying a house there and we ended up two houses away on a street in Old Town Alexandria and were there until he left. In fact, we never did move. We stayed there until I was unelected in 1992. And Susan, Barry's former wife, is one of my wife's best friends. Just last week she flew out to be with Norma for several days while she was in the hospital. So we're very close. And I did, as a matter of fact, talk to Barry a little bit. He called and said he was coming up. He didn't show. But I was going to talk to him about this interview. I would have had more remembrances had he actually arrived.

PITT: Can you tell us a little bit more about what you've been doing since you left Congress?

LAGOMARSINO: I've served on a lot of boards and commissions and things like that. Charities. And I have been quite active in trying to retain military bases in Ventura County and add to them, and so on. I serve on a board of directors of American Commercial Bank that my father started 26 years ago. And one thing I'm going to do next week--I'm a member of the board of the National Park Trust, sort of like The Nature Conservancy, but on a much smaller, more intimate scale, I guess you'd say. But we do some of the same things. We buy property and donate it to the Park Service, or give them money to buy property they can't get the money for and we're starting to work with State Parks now a little bit. Our biggest project is the tall grass prairie in Kansas.

PITT: I see. Well, you must be very proud of your record on issues involving the environment [such as] the Sespe Wilderness Act and . . .

LAGOMARSINO: That was probably the hardest one.

PITT: And the restriction on oil drilling, and so on. Is it true to say that when it comes to environment that ideological differences don't make that much difference?

LAGOMARSINO: Well, let's say they make <u>less</u> difference than some other issues. Most of the arguments or disagreements that I recall now were not so much about whether or not something should be saved or preserved or protected, but about <u>how</u> and who should do it. I think that's probably still the case.

PITT: Is there anything I've left out that I've forgotten or haven't asked you that you'd like to say about your reminiscences about this [Santa Monica Mountains] park or the Channel Islands Park?

LAGOMARSINO: As with most things, the toughest part about Channel Islands Park was getting the money to buy the private property, and I felt very responsible for, in effect, talking these owners into going along with this thing to some extent and then not being able to deliver. And they were in an impossible situation because once the park was created, it was impossible for them to sell the property except perhaps at a great loss. The feds were not coming through with the money. And the worst imaginable thing happened

when one of them died and here comes the estate tax collector right down the road and I had to really work very hard to get the money so that they could [pay the taxes]. I imagine almost all of it went to pay the taxes, not just on that piece of property. That was the largest part of this fellow's estate.

PITT: Did you get it through donations or from Congress?

LAGOMARSINO: From Congress. Mainly through the Senate. From [James] Jim McClure. Jim McClure was the chairman of the subcommittee in the Senate that had jurisdiction over funding for national parks.

PITT: So you felt a personal obligation here and worked very hard to bring it about?

LAGOMARSINO: Oh, I did. I really did. And I worked probably harder on that than anything and there were a number of people--I don't want to mention any names--but a number of people who just didn't think it was worth it. And some, I suppose, who said, Why should we pay for it? We got it anyway. Which was kind of true, but not very responsible.

PITT: Well, I thank you very much . . .

LAGOMARSINO: Okay. Well, thank you.

PITT: . . . for the interview and congratulations on your career and your efforts on behalf of the environment.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— XI —

FLOATING A GREENLINE PARK PROPOSAL

An Interview with Ray Murray

Mr. Murray worked for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation before the recreation area was formed. He was at the National Park Service headquarters in San Francisco for a phone interview on January 21, 1998.

Interviewee: Ray Murray
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: Hello, Ray. Let me ask you the first question, a background question, if you please. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born and raised and educated and how you came to work for the Park Service, and what your professional training was?

MURRAY: I was born in 1941 outside of Baltimore and went into forestry at Penn State. I started working for a newly-formed agency called the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in 1964 in Philadelphia. At that point the agency was charged with initiating the Land and Water Conservation Fund which provided 50 percent matching grants to state and local governments. I worked pretty much with New England. And about two years after that I had the opportunity to transfer out to the San Francisco office, and started getting involved in special area studies, among other things, which is how I came to be involved with the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: Were you trained as a planner?

MURRAY: I did not have a planning degree. Essentially what I've learned in planning over the years--it's been quite a bit of planning--has evolved with special studies and park management plans. What forestry provided basically was a natural resources background. There are different facets of that, which inform planning, but a lot of it has, essentially, been acquired.

PITT: You mentioned that you went to work for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in '64.

MURRAY: '65.

PITT: '65? Sorry. Tell us a little bit more about what its mission was and who comprised it.

MURRAY: The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was essentially formed as a result of the Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Commission which had been chartered in the Kennedy administration. Basically it was looking at emerging lifestyle patterns in the United States and leisure was becoming an increasingly larger component and outdoor recreation was becoming a stronger force in the economy. The intent was to provide some further stimulus to that from the federal government. The agency was established with a variety of technical assistance and grants functions and special area study functions, and also was charged with preparing a nationwide outdoor recreation plan.

PITT: I see.

MURRAY: The Congress gave discretion to the secretary of the Interior to create this agency and the irony of it was when [it] was first established a number of the people initially hired were hired from the National Park Service to form the agency.

PITT: Ray, if you'll pardon me, I am going to verify that the tape recorder is working, so hold off while I hit the stop button. [pause] Everything seems to be working here. Perhaps you can hear yourself in the background. Now, what was going on in California, in Sacramento, in the state Legislature and so on, regarding the Santa Monica Mountains when you came onto the scene? It isn't exactly clear to me. You came on the scene in 19 . . . ?

MURRAY: Sixty-nine.

PITT: Sixty-nine. Okay. To Sacramento or San Francisco?

MURRAY: Our office was in San Francisco. But let me clarify, put a few things in perspective which is how we came to be involved with the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: Sure.

MURRAY: There was, as part of the nationwide outdoor recreation plan that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was putting together, an urban initiative which would essentially try to establish national recreation areas in close to major urban centers that were under-served in the United States. Again, trying to bring major parks in closer to where people lived. In looking at potential areas, the two areas that initially were being considered were Gateway National Recreation Area around New York Harbor and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. I was involved in the feasibility study for establishing Golden Gate National Recreation Area around the mouth of the San Francisco Bay. At that time we were also looking in other places like Houston and Chicago. One of the places under consideration was Los Angeles. [We were] looking at Los Angeles from the standpoint of where would you establish a national recreation area and there had been citizen group activity that had focused on the Santa Monica Mountains. The state had set up a--I'm not sure if I have the right title for this--but essentially it was a commission that Joe Edmiston was the chief-of-staff for. It was a bi-county commission with Ventura and Los Angeles counties to look at protection strategies for the Santa Monica Mountains. And at the same

time Los Angeles County was working on a parks and open space plan element for their General Plan.

So as we got the Gateway and Golden Gate National Recreation Area proposal together, then we started looking at Los Angeles. I remember having an exploratory trip down there by flying in one day to take photographs. I was picked up by a police department helicopter at the Los Angeles airport, and flown over the Santa Monica Mountains. It was a pretty hazy day, so probably the photographs were limited, but it sort of gave us a visual look at the Santa Monica Mountains which we followed up with a field trip and exploratory meetings.

PITT: I think maybe this is the appropriate next question. Just tell us in your own words how you got to the point where you were going to do the study for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation regarding the Santa Monica Mountains. Give us the narrative. Am I right in remembering that Nixon was president by that time?

MURRAY: Yes.

PITT: And Rogers Morton, Interior Secretary?

MURRAY: Yes.

PITT: Okay. Just tell us in your own words, and take your time thinking through the narrative. And I'll come back maybe, and ask you some questions after that.

MURRAY: Are you ready?

PITT: I am ready. You may hear a little buzzing in the background, something is printing, but I'll try and mask it out, if I can.

MURRAY: Well, [on] one of the initial trips down there I remember distinctly going and meeting with top officials of the city of Los Angeles and the county of Los Angeles and essentially saying that the Interior Department was interested in the possibility of establishing a national recreation area [and] that we were prepared to make an investment in terms of federal acquisition dollars. I can remember distinctly laying out on the table the kind of magnitudes we were looking at. At one point we were talking about up to $200 million investment in terms of land acquisition. We knew land was expensive down there and that putting a National Recreation Area together would cost more there than some of the areas we were looking at around the country. That definitely got people's attention and that was when I started getting referred to a number of people with whom I [would have] an ongoing working relationship, primarily with the planning department of the county of Los Angeles. At that point they were required to have open-space elements in their general plans and that was under preparation. I think Larry Charness was the one that I did most of the work with, and his boss at L.A. County planning. We had subsequent contacts with Ventura County.

I started going to Santa Monica Mountains Commission meetings--I think that was the title of the state-chartered group that was trying to come out with a plan for the

Santa Monica Mountains. We also started working with California State Parks because they were updating their master plans for some of the units in the State Parks System that were in the Santa Monica Mountains.

[William] Penn Mott had had an aggressive acquisition program underway, and the more we looked into things, we found out that State Parks did have a major presence and had bought a lot of the best parts of the Santa Monica Mountains. [We got] to meet all of the different players down there, like Ralph Stone and Susan Nelson and Margot Feuer, and there was a whole cast of characters. We worked with Russ Stallings, who was with the L.A. Forestry Department, and he had the keys to get us into some of the fire roads that let us get a look at things, so we would have orientation trips with the county and the city planning people and we'd also have orientation trips with the citizens groups on the weekends. Gradually we got to see a lot of the mountains.

One of the things we initially did was take a look at property maps and we did plot out all the land ownerships by going to the County Assessor's Office in both the city and the county of Los Angeles and Ventura County. That started to give us a sense [of] the complexity of the land ownership in the Santa Monica Mountains [much of which] was still in private ownership. We also started to get the sense of how costly it would be to establish the park.

A very significant thing happened. When we started doing our study, I remember at one point we were called down by [Congressman] Alphonzo Bell and we were in there with him and his chief-of-staff. His chief-of-staff really laid into us that we hadn't been consulting adequately with his office, that his office was considering legislation and wanted to be fully involved. I remember we were somewhat defensive about that. But we did brief him about all the materials we had been assembling and putting together and we were also working with Frank Hendler, who was a citizen down there who was working somewhat independently with the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation. He also formed a pretty strong liaison in support of Congressman Barry Goldwater, Jr., who had his district in the [San Fernando] Valley. So we were keeping the different congressional offices involved.

A very significant thing happened with this urban initiative. Basically, the Nixon administration started looking at the cost of implementing it. As I recall there were something like 13 or 14 of these areas around the country, again with Golden Gate and Gateway being the two initial building blocks. In 1972, I was on the boat when President Nixon came out to view [what would become] Golden Gate National Recreation Area. He had a press conference on a boat just inside the Golden Gate Bridge that I attended. Within a month he signed the legislation that authorized setting up Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Gateway was also established. But they began to realize that these National Recreation Areas were going to be costly and the national economy was in a bit of a dive at that point. I can remember distinctly the assistant secretary of the Interior John Larson came into our offices and met with our regional director, Frank Sylvester, and essentially asked the question, How could we back out of the Santa Monica Mountains? Gary Barbano and myself were the principal people doing that study and writing the document. We were appalled. And the question was, how could we rescue this? And we were able to persuade Assistant Secretary Larson that this was so far down the road and that there was so much expectation locally that we had to finish the study

report. He reluctantly agreed that we were past the point of no return and that we had to bring the report to completion. So we got under the wire with that.

Our vision for the Santa Monica Mountains basically was that the state had bought the best parts of the Santa Monica Mountains and that these were included in Point Mugu and Topanga State Park and Malibu Creek State Park and Leo Carrillo State Beach. And what we envisioned basically was a greenbelt park. The greenline would be drawn around the total area that deserved protection, and we recommended a variety of land protection strategies. The thinking was, it would be a nationally designated area, but it would not necessarily be a nationally administered area.

Our thinking was that the State Parks System with their larger presence in the mountains might be the lead, and the federal funding that would be provided to fund acquisition might go to the state to further expand the State Parks holdings in the Santa Monica Mountains. In addition to that, a wide variety of land protection strategies would be utilized, including encouraging private land owners to adopt practices in managing their land that were compatible with resource protection, and to avoid developing their land wastefully. We worked with the Resource Conservation District and some of their members, and we knew there was already some strong support and encouragement for responsible land stewardship by private landowners.

We also made another assumption, which turned out to be a false assumption, that there were other lands that were in park compatible uses, and we looked particularly at nonprofit ownerships and commercial recreation enterprises like Calamigos Star Ranch and Pancho Gonzales Tennis Ranch, as I recall. There were a number of church camps. There was the Boy Scout camp at Circle X. And we made the assumption that these lands basically were being used compatibly with park purposes and providing recreation opportunities and that they would stay that way forever without having to be acquired. What turned out to be wrong was that some of these organizations--the Boy Scouts Circle X Ranch, as an example--eventually decided to cash out some of these properties. And of course we have that happening with churches quite a bit--consolidating their real estate ownerships.

So all of a sudden some of these properties have become available on the market and could either be developed for residential purposes or purchased and put under public land ownership. So the stability of nonprofit ownership turned out to be an incorrect assumption.

Let me cover one other thing. And then it may be a good opportunity for you to come in with questions, Leonard.

PITT: Okay.

MURRAY: So we ended up working more closely with Sen. Barry Goldwater, Jr.'s office. I can remember one time being called up at two in the afternoon. Could we come down and do a briefing for him that evening at his house? It was the week of his honeymoon--he had just gotten married. I remember coming to the house, they were just finishing up dinner and his wife sat in for a few minutes, and then she quickly got bored and left. But Barry was just totally immersed and involved in this plan. He also held a press conference later. I can remember that distinctly. We had a pretty good turnout from the public, and we presented the findings of the plan. This is what emerged eventually as

the 1974 plan. We essentially at that point delivered the plan. Here's a greenbelt park--or a greenline park--proposal, envisioning the State Parks as being the lead conservation organization. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy I don't think had been established at that point.

PITT: No.

MURRAY: We envisioned that that was probably the most realistic proposal for the mountains. It used this whole spectrum of land protection strategies: transfer of development rights, and all the kinds of things that were in the lexicon at that point of time for land conservation. So that resort sat on the shelf. We were under the stricture that the urban parks program must be essentially wrapped up, and this particular proposal was put out there, and that was basically as far as we were allowed to take it at that point in time. The economy evolved, and got healthier. The Congress got more aggressive about urban parks. The National Park Service was put under an edict to come up with a park proposal a month. The Park Service referred to it as the "Park-a-Month-Club."

In 1978 several things happened. One is the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was transformed into the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service with a new director, Chris Delaporte**,** and a broader mission for cultural resource protection, as well as natural resource protection and provision of recreation opportunities. A new urban recreation study was undertaken [to look] at major opportunities in cities around the country.

There was one other thing we were charged with at that time--I left this out. In 1976, I believe, we did a Los Angeles County open space study report, and we looked at the full inventory of open space in L.A. County and how it might be protected. It did, obviously, relate to the Santa Monica Mountains, but it looked at the whole county. That eventually led to the urban studies that were started in 1978.

Also at that time, Congress was again addressing legislation for major conservation issues and trying to put these urban park proposals into a major legislative package. In 1978 Golden Gate National Recreation Area got more expanded authority in its legislation and then the proposal for the Santa Monica Mountains was being revisited. We had two basic points of view. Our point of view--the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service--was that the better approach would be for Congress to provide the acquisition money to protect the mountains, but the money would go to the State Parks System rather than it becoming a unit of the National Park System. We felt that would be adequate protection.

Essentially, there was a major difference between our position and the position of the National Park Service which at that point decided that it definitely wanted to have a unit in Los Angeles and definitely supported the idea of it being a National Recreation Area managed by the National Park Service. So going into that legislation we had a definite difference of opinion by the two agencies. The Park Service position was upheld by the Congress and the area was established.

PITT: By 1978 you supported the notion of the Heritage Conservation Commission.

MURRAY: No. Not the commission. What we supported was the concept of . . .

PITT: Service, I should say.

MURRAY: . . . the greenline park.

PITT: The greenline park with the states.

MURRAY: Major federal funding for land acquisition to acquire what had to be acquired, but essentially state-administered.

PITT: Is it fair to say that this was a kind of compromise position, particularly at first, between nothing on the part of the federal government and a full national park, and you were trying to find some way to advance the cause that would be feasible.

MURRAY: I think it possibly initially emerged that way. Again, [we were] under orders to basically shut down the study and back out of these urban national recreation areas. But I think also we came to believe, mainly because of the large ownership of the state parks in the area and the fact that they had bought the best of the mountains, that in this particular case, it made sense to charter State Parks to be the primary park agency, and assume responsibility for coordinating all this effort within the greenline boundary that we had recommended.

PITT: I see.

MURRAY: I'm trying to think if I can clarify further. I think we really did come to believe in that proposal. That it really made the most sense. What we didn't take into account was that the citizen groups that were aggressive to protect the Santa Monica Mountains were determined for the Santa Monica Mountains to have a National Park System status. In retrospect, I think we were naive in assuming that Congress would put up the money, the large amount of acquisition money, for property that was not going to be federally owned.

PITT: So the grassroots organizations, the conservation organizations, did alter the picture through their persistence, in wanting the National Park Service to be on top of it. Is that right?

MURRAY: Well, I want to give maximum credit to the citizen groups. The citizen groups have always been in the Santa Monica Mountains. I mean names jump out at me like Jill Swift and Margot Feuer and Sue Nelson and Ralph Stone and all these different players. These are the people who have had the passion, for whatever reason, of having the mountains protected and wanting to have the National Park Service presence. It's their persistence that actually makes the difference with congressional offices. I mean, it really comes [down] to people who are really persistent and aggressive, and work to convince the Congressional members. I give them maximum credit.

Now we've entered into a partnership with State Parks, a particularly aggressive partnership over the last five years. What I've come to understand better is that the collective resources of the two agencies bode a much larger park presence and ability to

defend park resources than either agency operating on its own. Probably the only way to get the collective National Park Service, or national investment in the Santa Monica Mountains, was to have it be a unit of the National Park System.

PITT: Let me take you back a little bit to that first helicopter ride--your first impression perhaps of the Santa Monica Mountains. Why was it important to save them? What was your thinking, what was the thinking of your colleagues at the time? Is there something really special about it, or is it open land?

MURRAY: Several things became most apparent: One is the large extent of the Santa Monica Mountains. If you back off the Angeles National Forest, then the largest landscape that was still available to be saved or protected was the Santa Monica Mountains. Then we started looking at factors like the size and dimension, the height, the breadth, the reach into the very heart of Los Angeles. Another impressive factor [was] the variety of the landscapes, both cultural and natural. The proximity of the ocean was another major factor. So if we looked at the last relatively unblemished or undisturbed [open land space] with park-like qualities, it had to be the Santa Monica Mountains.

In the Open Space Study we did look at a variety of land forms and remaining open spaces around the L.A. Basin, and still the Santa Monica Mountains kept coming up, and at one point we were shocked. There was another activist working with the Santa Susana Mountains in the Simi Hills. I remember her coming up and making a presentation to us and trying to expand the study area to include the Santa Susanas and the Simi Hills. Again, at that point, we felt like even though there are a lot of quality resources in that area, that the Santa Monica Mountains were most valuable based on their proximity and their juxtaposition with the ocean. That was a major factor which sets up a whole variety of marine influences and different ecosystems and visual qualities.

PITT: Let me mention a few things--from a little chronology I've developed here--that were happening in the late 1960s and see if you have any reaction or recall of specific events. For one thing, you already mentioned William Penn Mott's aggressive effort, and there was a state park bond act approved by the Legislature in 1964, and there were meetings between local people and Secretary of Interior Stuart Udall. There was also, as you mentioned, the creation of Mugu State Park. Some of the people who were already on the scene--Anthony Beilenson was elected to the state Senate in 1966. One other thing. You mentioned Alphonzo Bell. I don't know what the year was, but it may have been right around that time--1970 or so--where he put forward a bill for a national park as a member of Congress. In any case, a bill regarding recreation. Do any of these things strike a chord with you? Do you want to add anything to the narrative you've already given?

MURRAY: Well, several things. I moved out here in '67. The state was aggressively implementing the bond act and I was aware of Bill Mott. I remember one of the things that really made an impression on me was early in that process becoming acquainted with the Santa Monica Mountains. I drove out to a hearing in Oxnard or Ventura. I think it was Oxnard. It was basically a public meeting that Bill opened up and essentially facilitated on Point Mugu State Park and development plans. And that was the time they were

envisioning a major golf course development there. That meeting was pretty intense. I remember Bill brilliantly standing up there and defending the Park position, but basically he got hammered in that meeting. After that meeting the State Parks System went through a little bit of a catharsis over this, and completely backed off and changed the whole concept for Mugu State Park to have a more natural emphasis. And I would also say that there was a sort of a parallel federal-state effort. Most of our tie-in and discussion was either at the local level or dealing with the congressional representatives there, starting with Alphonzo Bell. Again, I think Bell did have the first version of legislation for the Santa Monica Mountains. [We were] working with him and his aide fairly carefully. I'm trying to think if I've got my years wrong, because '78 or '80 was the legislation.

PITT: The legislation was '78.

MURRAY: Okay. Well, one of the things I'm thinking about was when we had Chris Delaporte. Chris was supposed to come down and get a fly over, and we had a helicopter lined up to look at both Channel Islands. And there was talk about expansion upgrading that to National Park status as well as a fly-over of the Santa Monica Mountains. So I flew down to meet Chris and be involved in his over-flight and we followed up with an evening meeting at Margot Feuer's house to meet all the players. Chris was a no-show. And I remember being down there. Congressman Bell's aide--I'm trying to remember the woman's name--anyway she was the congressional staffer. She stayed with me and we tried to run him down. We called the mayor's office and nobody could turn him up. Eventually we got a call that he had called the mayor's office to get a ride, and eventually he turned up at his hotel, and I just remember meeting him at the door and saying, "It better be good." And he just kind of shook his head. He had just gone back to some of his teenage haunts and just skipped the flight, but he did go to the meeting, and we did have a good meeting at Margot Feuer's office that evening. But I remember being really, really embarrassed and frustrated about all that after all the effort that people had gone through to give him an effective orientation.

PITT: There was also a congressman Teague of Ventura. Apparently both he and Bell had a concept for Toyon National Park. There were no hearings held, as I recall it, but in '72 the idea was floated [and] there were publications in the National Parks and Conservation magazine, and so on.

MURRAY: It's interesting that there was the Bell-Teague initiative, and then Barry Goldwater Jr. had a somewhat different vision for this and it seemed like more of our dialogue was with Barry's office. I think he also had introduced legislation and the transition from Toyon to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area--somewhere there was that transition. I remember when we had the press conference at Barry's office, he essentially was announcing his legislative initiative. So I think there was a transition there. I also think that--I remember distinctively--getting to know Joe a bit when he was . . .

PITT: Joe Edmiston?

MURRAY: . . . Edmiston. When he was executive director for the--I'm trying to remember the official name of the commission. I have to look it up.

PITT: That's prior to the Conservancy?

MURRAY: Yes. Essentially what happened is that they had a bi-county study commission.

PITT: The Ventura-Los Angeles Mountain and Coastal Study Commission.

MURRAY: Right. So that was underway. And they had various meetings. That's where I first met Feuer and got to know some of the players and I would go to their hearings. I got to know Joe in terms of what his vision was. And, of course, we were constantly keeping a dialogue with him and his ideas and bouncing things off of him. That essentially matriculated--I mean Joe's been very good at keeping a momentum. I think there's been a lot of controversy or concerns about some of the things Joe has done or the way he's operated. But I feel that Joe has been effective, has made a tremendous difference in protecting the mountains down there. And without the things he's been able to do through the Conservancy, we just wouldn't have the real estate that we have down there right now under public protection.

PITT: I see. That was a question, a very important question, I was going to ask you. Did you encounter City Councilman Marvin Braude?

MURRAY: Yes. I should have mentioned that name because Marvin was, of all the City Council persons, the most aggressive. Of course it was his district, too, in terms of the Santa Monica Mountains. So we met him fairly early on, and I think the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation had a pretty good dialogue with Marvin about the value of protecting the mountains.

So, always in looking at this thing, there were some major turfs and some major players and some major egos involved and the question was timing. The park would not have been established without all the reinforcing elements. First of all, the city having an interest in [its] portion, [and] the county with [its] open space element in [its] general plan [which was] required at that time. Those were all in progress and were all looking at the Santa Monica Mountains. Of having the state Ventura-Los Angeles County Commission, of having the aggressive state park bond issue acquisition expansion of parks. I think when we first got on the scene, Topanga State Park was just being acquired and that was the next major addition to the State Parks System. I think Twentieth Century Ranch, when I first got involved with it, was still a movie ranch and I think the state acquired it pretty quickly. I'm not sure when they bought it was after we got involved.

PITT: Now when you were working on your study from '72 to '74, were there any prior studies that you leaned on? Reports? Well, you did mention consulting basic data like land data offered by the county.

MURRAY: Property.

PITT: Property. Right. But were there any prior studies that you used as a foundation for what you were doing?

MURRAY: Well, I have to say, that was like ’71. We’re talking almost 25 years later. My recall is a little rusty on this, but basically what we did was look at everything we could find. We worked closely with George Rackleman. He was the state planner who was in charge of the general management plans in the Santa Monica Mountains and he was the primary liaison to Joe Edmiston’s planning efforts. We looked at the planning reports that came out of the commission. We had two phases of reports. As I recall the first draft that we did was done in ’72. And then we [had] the final report published in ’74. I remember just a very preliminary account where we just put down some alternatives. If we invested $200 million, here’s what we could protect. If we invested $70, if we invested $140 million. Those were the figures that we initially started brainstorming from.

PITT: I’m looking at the report now. There’s no personal authorship. If you had to give it the name, or the names of people who were chiefly responsible for it, such as yourself and others, how would you do that?

MURRAY: I was the principal author of it, and Gary Barbano**,** who was also a planner in our office, he and I were the ones that worked on it. We had some graphics assistance, but we essentially wrote most of the document. Gary was along on most of the field trips. Some of them I was doing initially and then Gary [was doing them]. But anyway, Gary was definitely there for most of it and he might be somebody you’d want to talk to as well. Right now he’s our chief planner in our office in Hawaii.

PITT: Thank you for that. That’s an idea.

MURRAY: I’d be curious to get his perspective. We were down there weekends, nights, all kinds of things.

PITT: Where did you actually work when you came down here?

MURRAY: Wherever we could. It was literally working out of hotel rooms and sometimes county offices, the assessor’s office. We just literally had quad sheets and were just plotting, drawing in pencil on the topo quad sheets. I think we were the first people who ever put together a property ownership map of the whole Santa Monica Mountains with both counties and the city.

PITT: That’s fascinating.

MURRAY: When the Trust for Public Land was being established as a spin-off from The Nature Conservancy--and Huey Johnson and Greg Archibald came into our offices and we were brainstorming on places they could really get started, and one we suggested to them was Santa Monica Mountains. Eventually we turned over a copy of all our quad

sheets to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and this was one of the first areas they started working on. Later on there was one particular property that they did acquire and it turned out that there was an investigation on this particular property. It was in Cheeseboro Canyon and the owners had transferred the land in such a way that they artificially drove up the price and TPL ended up paying an inordinate price for it. Eventually the federal Attorney General's office--I'm trying to remember which particular agency, because Mary Gibson Scott was working for them at that time--and they did an investigation and found out there was malfeasance and eventually there was a major suit over it.

But we were constantly going back and forth with the Trust for Public Land over some properties that they had acquired, and we would reimburse them for fair market value. Usually they negotiated at less [than] a fair market value, but in several properties they kind of got burned in paying more than they should have. That came back to haunt us. And that really influenced our relationship with them. Again I look at the Trust for Public Land as one of these aggressive players that, before the Conservancy was established, was making crucial acquisitions and building momentum for expanding the parks.

PITT: Now . . .

MURRAY: Let me answer one other question, Leonard, that I didn't fully answer.

PITT: Sure.

MURRAY: You asked where we got material. In a lot of cases, for the mountains and trying to assemble the maps we put together for the mountains, there hadn't been analysis for the mountains in all the jurisdictions. So we took what we could get from the open space plans that were in progress, and from any available source from State Parks, but in a lot of cases, like doing the topo survey and looking at the various degrees of slope in the mountains to try and determine what property was developable or at risk for development versus what was not.

I mean, we just did that physically by hand up here in the office in San Francisco. That was another interesting thing. We made an assumption that slopes over 35 percent were undevelopable. Well, what we observed in subsequent years is that anybody who has enough money to put into site engineering can basically get to the point where they can put something up.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: Did I allow you to finish your thoughts there?

MURRAY: I think so. Or at least I lost the train.

PITT: [both laughing] Now, when Congress in 1978 came forth with a National Recreation Area for Santa Monica, how did you feel about that since it was not the federal assistance for an intergovernmental approach that you had laid out four years prior? Was that okay with you?

MURRAY: Well, I had some mixed feelings about it, obviously, because the conclusions that we had made in 1974 we felt was a good way to go, and I felt fairly supportive of the State Parks role in the mountains and possibly an expanded role for them. On the other hand, I felt somewhat positive about becoming under the National Park System. One of the things you have to understand, in 1978 the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service was a small scrappy agency--when I say small it never had over 600 employees, and on the average usually had about 400. It was disbanded in 1980 or '81. That's how I came into the National Park System. It was sort of a shotgun marriage. Jim Watt said, "You will take these people." And the Park Service, depending on which office it was, did it gracefully.

It was a very difficult transition, both for the Park Service and the people that were transferred over. But there was some rivalry between the two agencies. Part of it began when the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) was started and a number of functions were taken away from the National Park Service and put into this new agency. When Watt abolished the agency in 1981--or 1980--they were put back in the NPS. But it did create some rifts politically and position-wise. I can remember being in Washington on a detail--on urban parks, by the way--about the time that this was announced. I remember the discussion back and forth with people about it. There was a guy that was head of planning for the National Park Service--[he] was a great guy to work with and we worked on a number of urban initiative studies around the country. I remember him shaking his head that the way this was done was really going to create some major differences. That's when HCRS was established. So that may have colored some of the thinking. Of course, as soon as the Santa Monica Mountains NRA was established I did go up and meet with--both agencies were in the same building--we met with the Park Service people and turned over all the materials that we had on the Santa Monica Mountains from all the studies. We played a pretty supportive role up until the time we merged with the Park Service. And then a couple of things happened in the early 80s that I can tell you about, which is a different evolution.

PITT: O.K. Maybe we'll get into that. I want to take you back just one little step here. In your report you referred to the land developers, specifically an organization, Advocates for Better Coastal Development, and then a citizens' group that they influenced, Concerned Citizens for Local Government. What can you tell me about those organizations?

MURRAY: Well, I can say that you had a number of large developers that had major projects on the boards that they were trying to get approval for and a couple of times we met some of those people. Of course, they were trying to buy off where they wanted to go, and we were concerned that some of these large developments were really compromising some of the park-like settings in the mountains. So I can tell you, during

the time we were working on the study--I mean you see some of these things in the movies (*Chinatown* is a good example)--I really had some apprehensions about how serious this was going to get if they didn't get their way. And we were just not buying into a number of the development proposals [and] expressing more and more concerns about the mountains being developed. So there's no question we were on opposite sides of the fence, and I think they, from a public relations standpoint, were setting up. I mean this goes on today with a lot of other areas we're involved in.

PITT: Did you feel physically threatened?

MURRAY: There were times when you wondered, are they going to get frustrated at some point and come after you? What you saw officially was very positive, putting on the best face to make this come across to the public that this is fairly benign. But I really think we felt like either you develop the mountains or not. Once you develop, it's like in the L.A. County Open Space Study we did, I think that was in '76, one of the things I quickly realized [was] that open space is a vanishing commodity. You're not creating more open space. There's a constant shaving of what's [left]. You start with essentially land that's in agricultural use or basically undeveloped and just compromise from there. When you fly over the L.A. Basin at night in a small plane at a low elevation those lights go on forever. And try driving through it. It's just amazing. And what we were seeing was a very fast attrition of open space, particularly around the edge of the San Fernando Valley up into the Simi Hills as well as some of the major proposals for the Santa Monica Mountains.

The one at the mouth of Topanga Canyon is kind of interesting in that there was a whole new subdivision there that was jammed right up against the park, and more and more I came to the conclusion if you don't buy it you can't protect it. We looked at the Williamson Act agricultural easements--it was being touted as a major way to preserve agricultural lands. The reality of it was [that] once the owner of the agricultural lands [paid] off the penalty for the reduced taxes they paid as a result of being under Williamson Act easements, [the cost] was nothing compared to what they were getting for property which was primed for development. The pressure was there. So we felt, and I have always felt, and I feel this more and more, that [for] these urban parks and land protection, it's a race against time. I go back to where I grew up on 32 acres back outside of Baltimore which my parents bought after the war. That's all subdivided and we just sold off our family house of 50 years and even that remaining 2.2-acre lot was further subdivided. So, I'm a strong believer in the public and non-profit conservancy role in land protection.

Zoning down there [is] another thing I should mention. We looked at the zoning actions by the county and the up-zoning that was taking place and just came to the conclusion that if public agencies had the will to protect through zoning, they would. But there's hardly any City Council or Board of Supervisors that, in the face of strong development pressures, [and] in the [need] to generate taxes, would deny approvals to develop. Of course this is a vicious cycle when you look at the economics of it. Tax revenues usually don't pay off the public infrastructure investment for developing land. But there's that constant pressure. Zoning has not really been used effectively anyplace to protect land over time.

PITT: I'll take you back a step or two. Any further thoughts about any of the California Legislature, besides Beilenson, [like Howard] Berman, for example, that you may or may not have worked with?

MURRAY: We did have really good relationships with Berman's office. And Berman would show up a lot of places for public meetings. I mean he really put himself on the line. So I look at him as one of the major political players in the protection of the mountains.

PITT: You expressed high hopes in your report for a coastal commission and what it would do on the seaward side of the mountains. Have you been disappointed?

MURRAY: Yes. Absolutely no question about that.

PITT: Can you explain that a little bit?

MURRAY: Well, I think the Coastal Commission became a political agency when you have people serving at the whim of whichever administration appoints the members. We have seen a change in that when it was first established, I think the Coastal Commission attracted more people with more of a conservation bias. Staff people I worked with in this office went down and worked with the [person] that was based in Long Beach. But I think as more and more rulings came down, we saw that this wasn't really going to hold the line either. One of the things I remember really being impressed with was there were several places where there were public access easements that were supposed to be through coastal development. Basically, people had the right to go through the line of houses up against the beaches. I remember we went down and looked at one and there were walls across it. One property owner had a shuffle board court on his [easement]. Eventually, I think it was the Coastal Commission that went back and got those reopened for public access. But it was as if the beach wasn't in public ownership, it was just walled off.

PITT: I see. In your report you favored a scenic roadway for Mulholland. Some have argued strongly that this was contrary to the idea of preserving open space and would merely encourage the development of housing, and so on. What was your thinking at the time relative to Mulholland and do you now have a new opinion?

MURRAY: Sure. There's no question that Mulholland, going along the spine of the Santa Monica Mountains, gave people an appreciation and view of the mountains, and its various forms and landscapes and attraction. Even back then when we were looking at the mountains, I remember [developers] were starting to develop golf courses in the valleys surrounded by condominiums or houses which they'd sell off. The whole idea of the golf course was not [to save] open space; it was basically [for] marketing the condos and the subdivisions. So we quickly got concerned about that. There was one Japanese church in which golf was part of their religion. They started showing up as some of the developers. So you'd look at these land ownership patterns and say, who's the blind real estate group

that's holding this development? And some of them were fairly transparent, as we went through assessors maps.

But what you look at today when you drive Mulholland--it's pretty staggering in terms of the intensity of some of the subdivisions going in there, and the fact that a number of them are relatively large lots. And there's a lot of fantasy architecture in the Santa Monica Mountains, as there is all around the L.A. Basin. If people have enough money they're going to build their dream whatever it is, [or] a developer is going to build it, and find somebody who's going to buy it.

There was an area we looked at outside of Tucson, next to Saguaro National Monument (now National Park). Working with the superintendent we started looking at the nature of the different subdivisions and how some had been done really sensitively to protecting environmental values, and the view shed, just by the materials they used, the colors, and the landscaping. One golf course had been developed. What they had been able to accomplish was to limit the vegetation changes to the greens and the fairways, and keep the desert vegetation edge up close to it. By irrigating, and by using the runoff from that, and by the additional vegetation that that generated, they'd actually replaced the bird habitat that had been lost, which was kind of an interesting trade off.

And there's the Ventana resort in Tucson where they put a fence right up to the edge of the building and the developer had to stay within that fence line. And when they took the fence down you had the building, but you had the desert vegetation intact right up to the very edge of it. There's a lot of things you can do. The Santa Monica Mountains NRA put out some guidelines about compatible development, but it's an area that we still need to work further with.

PITT: There are some who would say just leave it the way it is. Any upgrade would ruin the whole thing.

MURRAY: The reality is that you're going to have some upgrade, so the question is, if you're going to have it, you're going to have subdivisions, what mitigation measures can you put in? I think we realized from day one, basically, that there's not enough money to buy everything within the green line. We realized it would take a combination of different land protection mechanisms, and one part of that strategy was for development to be as compatible as possible with protected values in the Santa Monica Mountains. And I think that with the kind of money that's there, it's still possible. I remember one of the ideas that Frank Hendler had--he was a very creative guy, a planner and designer by background--one of his ideas was establishing cemeteries in the Santa Monica Mountains, which essentially would use the natural land forms and the natural vegetation, and have a minimal size memorial plaque. It would be a way of funding [and] protecting some acreage in the mountains, and not have the tombstones. We were thinking about every conceivable thing we could think of.

PITT: That's suggestive of Forest Lawn, as a matter of fact, on the [San Fernando] Valley side.

MURRAY: Except that the difference is it wouldn't be manicured.

PITT: Ah, right.

MURRAY: It would be natural vegetation.

PITT: Now, I'm looking at your report and those wonderful maps in the rear pocket. I don't know whether you have those handy. There were nine of them, and they're on compatible land use, and drainage, and existing parks, and so on. I wonder if you're in a position to take any of those maps--maybe not all of them--but the ones that are the most important, and say to us, what you see there that was of importance when you prepared them, and how they might stack up and how they might look today.

MURRAY: I don't have those in front of me right now.

PITT: You don't. I see.

MURRAY: I can go get the draft map, but the final set I don't have. Possibly we can do this on a successive call when I do have them in front of me.

PITT: Okay.

MURRAY: What I was going to suggest to you is that having gone to the Santa Monica Mountains for I guess the better part of 28 years, I never in my imagination realized how much some of the areas could change in terms of development. I look at the 101 corridor, particularly when you get towards Las Virgenes [Rd.] and that commercial strip and that area that's being built. I look at the subdivisions around the Peter Strauss Ranch. Now when you take slides at a place like the Paramount Ranch where *Dr. Quinn: Medicine Woman* is shot.

PITT: That's CBS Twentieth Century, I think. It's now in use, and I think the contract is to CBS.

MURRAY: They still have the set and everything there, but they have to be careful now how you take slides or how they do shoots, because they have subdivisions in the background. And if you get up on the high ground, particularly the stuff that's in close to the city or along that initial section of Mulholland corridor from the San Diego Freeway heading westward, it's just amazing what's been developed there.

PITT: Yes.

MURRAY: I look [with amazement] at that whole mouth of Malibu Creek in that area. There was a colony there but some of the subdivision, particularly on the north side of the Pacific Coast Highway, and the buildout in that area out toward Trancas and Zuma.

PITT: So, absent the map in front of you, I'll just ask you this question. Your greenline, the one you proposed in 1972-74--would that be more or less the right line?

MURRAY: I think it's proximate to what initially got established in the legislation. I still think it was the right line to draw, but some of the things that happened within it--we did not anticipate quite the intensity of development.

PITT: I see. Yes, there would be no way to anticipate that at the time. You're quite right.

MURRAY: And the other thing I recall. We really weren't thinking much north of the 101 highway--and I have to look at the map again . . .

PITT: Of the 101?

MURRAY: We weren't thinking of Cheeseboro Canyon . . .

PITT: . . . which have since come onto the map. Behind me, on the wall, I have the Land Protection Plan of a more recent vintage.

MURRAY: By the way, that's just being redone right now.

PITT: Yes. So I understand.

MURRAY: Now you have the current [plan] on public review. It's almost out if it's not already out.

PITT: Speaking of things that are current, this morning's *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, Metro Section, there's an article and a map showing that $5.5 million in federal funds, in addition to a $1 million previously approved, are going to be used to complete the Backbone Trail. So, the trail that was through Point Mugu, and there was a big gap there between Mugu and Malibu State, 400 acres--12 parcels--are going to be purchased. Is that good news to you?

MURRAY: That's wonderful! I think we envisioned the Malibu Corridor and the idea of a backbone, a unifying trail. It's just been a great concept right from the beginning. Part of the dream is you hike from one end of the mountains to the other. So that is coming to fruition in a relatively short time compared to most long distance trails.

PITT: It will be open next year according to Art Eck [Supt. of the NRA]. There's a picture of Art Eck and Congressman Brad Sherman.

MURRAY: Those things are wonderful. It's like the same thing here with Golden Gate National Recreation Area. I live in the city [of San Francisco] and I use the park a fair amount, and when I see the programs and the activities that go on, and what's been put in protection, it makes late nights and all anxieties and working weekends, and all that stuff, seem like, this was just a wonderful thing to have been involved in. Of course, all these things are collective efforts. There are lots of players and congressional people were absolutely crucial to make sure things happen.

One of the things that impressed me, by the way, is that, in terms of land acquisition, from the time the park was established the park did very well in terms of getting federal Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations each year for land acquisition. It was kind of clicking along at the order of $12 to $15 million a year until recently.

PITT: And it's been below $1 million a year, if I'm not mistaken, for several years.

MURRAY: Which is kind of surprising. Another thing that was interesting is that at one point, when President [George] Bush was giving one of his State of the Union addresses, the only park he mentioned was Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and it had to do with land protection, land acquisition down there. I don't know who got to him, or how that was finessed. I asked that question a number of times, and I never did find out.

PITT: Well, I'll be sure and ask Anthony Beilenson. He must know the answer if it wasn't he.

MURRAY: Tony was a Democrat, right?

PITT: Yes. Well, I'll find out.

MURRAY: It was some Republican connection somewhere.

PITT: Right.

MURRAY: Another interesting thing was taking on [Bob] Hope. When we did the initial property maps we were told that Hope was a major landowner, or presence, in the mountains and that he invested in property. But we had no idea until we did the property ownership maps how much he really owned. And then there was that whole finessing of events in getting him to do a bargain sale, in which Joe Edmiston played hardball and pulled that off.

PITT: There was also the Gillette Ranch which today the Park Service considers the heart of the recreation area, the one owned by Soka University. Was that something you could visualize back then?

MURRAY: No question.

PITT: [Could you foresee] its importance and how difficult it would be?

MURRAY: That was before Soka had bought it, and it was, as I recall, we referred to it as the Gillette Ranch and then it was the Claretian seminary taking it over.

PITT: Right.

MURRAY: We always felt that was prime property and that would be an ideal place and should definitely be put in public ownership and use. And, of course, the controversy with Soka and the political tug over that, and the cost of it, has made that a major, elusive target right now.

PITT: You also said in your report that a comprehensive in-depth analysis is needed. And I'll give you a quote now, "to produce a workable plan that will satisfy the conservationist, the developer, the study area resident, and the public at large." That's on page 45. Considering all the players and the enormous stakes, was that really feasible, or is that whistling in the dark?

MURRAY: It was idealistic thinking. [laughter] I mean, I've always been optimistic that you can find a compromise. I worked on general management plans for Grand Canyon, for Yosemite, we're just starting Sequoia-Kings Canyon, we've got Santa Monica Mountains, by the way, just being started up this past year as a joint effort with State Parks. We're working plans with Redwoods and Lassen Volcanic Lava Beds--all the ones I've been involved with. I see things differently now. What I see basically now is the race with time in terms of protecting land before it's developed and becomes too expensive to acquire.

And what's a much stronger imperative now, than we thought earlier, was this idea of protecting ecosystems and bio-diversity. [When] we initially did the study for the National Recreation Area, our thinking was we're primarily going to provide opportunities for people to come and enjoy the scenic views and the hike and the bike and ride horseback, and have recreation opportunities, and possibly bring inner city kids out and everything. This happened with Golden Gate as well. Those arguments were used to get it through Congress. It was a question of numbers, in terms of how many people would benefit from this area being established, and congressional appropriations to buy the land and develop the recreation opportunities, and provide the staffing and the programming.

The reality of it was--and this was a factor with the Santa Monica Mountains and a lot of the players--people basically didn't want to see the mountains become overly developed for recreation and overly used. This is an irony. People want their experience they've had to be protected, whether it be a backdrop for their house or an undisturbed viewshed, or a relatively solitary experience. And, of course, you create parks, and the more well-known and more visible the park is, eventually you have a high demand and a high use. And while I'm seeing more of this idea of compromise, what has changed my thinking is that you have more and more conflict in terms of everybody wanting their value or recreation interest protected, whether it's Pat Benetar being uptight about us opening a trail head in Zuma Canyon near her house and whether people coming and going are going to encroach on her privacy and on what she and her husband have built there.

Then you have the issues of the hikers and the equestrians and the trail runners and mountain bicyclists on the use of trails in the Santa Monica Mountains. We tried essentially to arbitrate that process and come up with a comprehensive trails plan for the Santa Monica Mountains. People today are going to the mat for whatever their interest is. Whether it's their backyard view or their particular recreation pursuit versus somebody

else's and how that other activity is going to infringe on their enjoyment. So increasingly, the Park Service and State Parks as the managers of the parkland have to arbitrate as best we can. Eventually, if we can't get a consensus agreement or compromise--which in the case of the trails we really couldn't--then we're just going to have to say, this is the way we're going to try and run it, and here's the rationale for doing it.

PITT: I see. I hear lately a prime consideration to a north-south corridor for wildlife in the mountains. Am I hearing that right as a newly articulated objective?

MURRAY: Well, one of the objectives is how to get animals, particularly large animals, across the Ventura Freeway. It started out with mountain lions and deer and larger mammals. As you divide these areas by high traffic freeways, the animals really can't get across without getting killed. Then you start to influence the health of gene pools and bio-diversity. The ideal thing would be to have a way for them to cross under. [There are] some underpasses [in] the studies that they've done. It's one thing to have one or two underpasses in a 40-mile corridor versus what animals were able to free range across almost indiscriminately back before European-influenced urban development started taking place. It's become a major factor.

Most mammals put on quite a few miles in the course of a day or night and they need a variety of ecosystems and places where they can catch food and find water. So they need the ability to move freely. And, again, the developments tend to block a lot of that. Coyotes are proving to be fairly resilient, and drink out of swimming pools and eat poodles. Deer seem to hang in fairly well. Raccoons and 'possums can do fairly well. Mountain lions are much more of a challenge. But again, with all that, what we're looking for is to find ways that as areas are developed at least some of those major connective corridors are left intact as much as possible.

PITT: As you look back over the work of 20-odd years ago, perhaps you could think of it in summary and say how you rate the quality of your work. How do you rate the impact of your report? And by extension, do you wish you had done or said anything differently in that report [of 1974]?

MURRAY: I think even though a couple of things that we did not realistically consider--one was whether you can get the kind of balanced plan that you'd like to get. I think that's difficult in today's society. I think the idea of the stability of the non-profit ownerships seem to be some wrong thinking. The market for resource-compatible development is, I think, in some ways, growing but it's not necessarily reflected in a lot of the development that's taken place in the interim in the mountains. I think the other assumption that was difficult is that we had some idea of what it would cost to buy the lands that should be in full public ownership. The problems is that, over time, the amount of money it takes to do it increases substantially when you don't have it all up front. [For] $14 or $15 million a year, the park was able to get some good properties and make a dent, but if you look at what you're getting now, that is definitely insufficient to keep up.

PITT: Yes.

MURRAY: What we didn't anticipate with State Parks is that they would have such difficult financial times. And I think having worked closely with the State Parks System, particularly in the last five years, I know what they've been through and I know what it costs. We assumed, I think, that there would be more access and more facilities in the state parks than there are today in the Santa Monica Mountains. I think we also assumed that Point Mugu Lagoon would have been transferred by now into park ownership rather than still be with the navy. If all the tools were used effectively that would be one thing, but the economic drivers strongly influence the politics and land use decisions. Again, I've been somewhat appalled at some of the denser subdivision that is going on in the Santa Monica Mountains. I look at corridors elsewhere in the state [as I] drive up to Sacramento and I just watch that corridor change over the years and it's gradually infilling. You wonder where a state with 33 million people and 40, 50, 60 million people, and more over time, are going to go. I mean, what's going to be protected? I just thank God that as much has been protected since the plan, as has been done.

PITT: How do you answer? Say for the next five, ten, or more years, what's your prediction for the Santa Monicas?

MURRAY: Well, [we have] too slow a rate of land protection. We're getting some properties now. We're getting donated properties, and that's making some small additions to the Santa Monica Mountains public estate. I think what has to happen is some large investments. I'd like to see more philanthropy play an active role in protecting the Santa Monica Mountains, and also providing some more programmatic and access opportunities for people to fully appreciate the Santa Monica Mountains. I think the slowdown in the real estate market helped for a while.

PITT: Now we're back in a different era.

MURRAY: Yes. We're building again. And that increases the rate that the landscape is being transformed. So again, what I'd like to see is closer work with the development community, and the development community taking responsibility for more responsible development. It's not just marketing the house. It's creating a relationship with the land that's being developed both for the people who buy in as well as others. One of the things being looked at is, I know with the Ahmanson Ranch, is something similar that we tried to get going, and have gotten going, at Saguaro [National Monument], working with the Luther Probst and the Sonoran Institute. Part of that concept is that you finance nature centers from subdivisions and you provide that programming and you also create stronger awareness with the developers and homeowners to protect natural values as much as possible. And that may still sound idealistic but I think there is a growing recognition about that.

PITT: Good to end on a positive note.

MURRAY: Let me add another thing that we really didn't get into.

PITT: Please do.

MURRAY: We are into a partnership with State Parks, starting about four or five years ago. It started initially with concern about redwoods, whether we would take over the state parks within Redwood National Park. There are three state parks there. We had an aggressive superintendent that was trying to do exactly that, and we were really at loggerheads with State Parks and we put together an independent study group. We looked at Redwood, Golden Gate, and the Bay Area parks, where we had adjacencies with state parks, and we looked at Santa Monica Mountains. Looking at Santa Monica Mountains what we saw was that the combined resources of the two agencies were making more of a positive difference there. So our vote went for Redwood and Golden Gate to continue work as a partnership rather than to preempt other agencies. So we have a pretty full-blown partnership right now. We have some rough edges to it, but what we're really trying to do is get common standards for trail use and development, access, facilities, emergency response, interpretation, and really put the combined resources of both park agencies together.

I'm hopeful that there will be a state park bond issue this summer. The state's been without a bond issue for the last 10 years. It's really limited acquisition. I just thank God that Joe [Edmiston] has been as aggressive and successful as he has in terms of getting money for the Santa Monica Mountains. But I'm optimistic that there will be more money to go into that investment, and a partnership. And I think what Art Eck wants to do with this general management plan/general plan that we're doing as a combined effort with State Parks and the Conservancy, is to use this as a unifying vision-building, with all the local governments involved in the Santa Monica Mountains to see if we can get closer to that common vision that we talked about in the '74 plan. At least embrace strategies that will protect as much as possible the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: That would help, wouldn't it? A common vision, including on the grassroots area, and among the congress people, and so on, to have a single objective, or single set of objectives.

MURRAY: At least to understand what you're working towards. The problem is you have constant turnover in the players. The Board of Supervisors that were there, all those have turned over since we initially started. I think Marvin [Braude] is still there, isn't he?

PITT: No, he just retired.

MURRAY: Did he?

PITT: He's now a visiting professor at some of the local universities. But he retired as of this spring and Cindy Miscikowski is his replacement on the L.A. City Council.

MURRAY: Well, I guess the point is that people do change over time, and it changes points of view, relationships, it changes political action. Even with the superintendents that the National Park Service has had, we've had varying degrees of effectiveness. I think [Robert] Chandler was the right person for his time and I think that Art is the right person for his time.

Another thing we tried to get established there was a stronger parks foundation. This was something I think we recommended in the report, that there be a park foundation for the Santa Monica Mountains. And Sue [Nelson] initially tried to set one up. Then the National Park had an advisory commission for a while which they disbanded. Then Bill Mott, after he was director for the Park Service, came out here in the late ’80s and he went down and tried to get the State Parks and the National Parks to work more closely together. This is something that has never come together the way it should. There is a Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation, but it still doesn’t have the strength in terms of a board and a full-time staff to really do the job that should be done.

PITT: To raise money, to raise donations, and to give them to the state and to the federal [governments]?

MURRAY: Yes, to raise money for either programs or for land protection, or whatever is needed. I look at what Golden Gate National Recreation Area has been able to accomplish here, and I know that the potential is there, particularly with the wealth that’s in the L.A. Basin. I’ve worked with each of the superintendents to try to get them to be more aggressive. One time I went down and did a workshop for the Foundation but they still don’t have all the players they need to have there. This is something that’s still not a fully realized opportunity.

PITT: Well, the tape is nearly at an end, and I appreciate very much the interview. It’s clear to me you did a vital piece of work in the report and you’re still doing it. I congratulate you, and, again, I thank you for this. And if there are any further thoughts you have, let me know, and I will reserve the opportunity to call you, and maybe ask you a couple more questions for clarification.

MURRAY: I’ll be curious to see your product because it is a fascinating story.

PITT: It certainly is. And you will be seeing that product.

End of Tape, Side B

End of Interview

— XII —

PROTECTING THE LUNGS OF LOS ANGELES

An Interview with Gail Osherenko

Gail Osherenko, an environmental lawyer, was a legislative assistant to Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson in 1978. In that capacity she helped shape the segment of the Omnibus Parks Bill dealing with the Santa Monicas. This interview was conducted by phone in 1998 when Ms. Osherenko had a post at the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College, Vermont.

Interviewee: Gail Osherenko
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: This is Leonard Pitt interviewing Gail Osherenko. This is a telephone interview, on August 17, 1998 for the National Park Service. Professor Osherenko is in her home in Vermont and I am in my home in Los Angeles.

The first thing I want to do, Gail, is to ask you to take your time and describe, in your own words, your connection with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and give us an overview with as much detail as you can. When you are done I have some specific questions that I will ask you in order to flesh out your narrative. So, please begin.

OSHERENKO: My involvement in the creation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area began sometime while I was working for Tony [Anthony] Beilenson when he was still representing his district in the California State Senate. I was hired as a legislative assistant, though that isn't what they called us there, in 1975 in the fall. I was mostly working on the California Coastal Act, trying to get it passed, but I had some involvement in thinking about, and working on, issues relating to the protection of land in the Santa Monica Mountains site. I remember relatively little about that period. After Beilenson was elected to Congress he invited me, as well as Kathleen Bonfilio to come back to work in his Washington office and we both agreed to do that.

My responsibilities included following the activities of the Science and Technology Committee to which he was assigned and introducing and looking after any legislation he was involved in [that was] related to the environment. My primary responsibility, and probably most of my time, went to trying to get a bill passed to create a national park in the Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Islands. I wish I could remember lots of details on that but I remember relatively little. Maybe things you will say or ask will jog my memory. Much of this effort had gone on for years, long before I knew anything about it, and it was being promoted by people who had been in the front lines of the grassroots movement to create this park years and years before. They are, interestingly enough, still on the front lines of protecting this land. So I was a bit player in helping to facilitate and grease the skids of this effort over the two-year period I worked in the congressional office, from 1977 to 1979, when I left to take a job in the Justice Department, with the Land and Natural Resource division. By that time the bill

had passed and I felt it could be a long time before I got the chance to work on the front lines of another bill that primarily had Beilenson's name on it. So I was ready to move on and use my law degree in other ways.

What do I specifically remember about the specifics? I think probably the most important and critical fact that made this bill move at this time was that all of the political players were in the right place at the right time. It was a kind of convergence of circumstances and particularly of leadership. The fact that Phil Burton was chairing the relevant subcommittee, and was a big supporter of Tony and of the Park, and was interested in making his mark in adding a lot of land to the National Park System--and protecting some particularly important places in California. That helped us immeasurably.

I think the fact that [Jimmy] Carter was elected to be president was useful. Interestingly enough, my recollection of the Carter administration was that they were not particularly enthusiastic about the Santa Monica Mountains becoming part of the National Park System. Nor were they convinced that the way we had chosen to do the protection through a very traditional creation of a national recreation area--actually buying the land as opposed to some alternatives that were floating around at the time and were used in other places, such as drawing a line around an area and then using a variety of techniques to control development--and not necessarily putting the main focus on purchasing land. I think they wanted to know why we didn't take that approach. At any rate, I do remember setting up and going into a meeting with people in the National Park Service who were chief advisors to the president and having some anxiety that we really needed to make a strong case in order to proceed.

I remember little details about the way in which Tony operated in a medium like that. I remember him walking in to the assistant secretary's office and noticing various pictures on the wall, commenting on them, and getting a conversation going to establish a general rapport and good feeling before we started talking about brass tacks. And I remember when we left the meeting having a very good feeling that we would get the support we needed from the Park Service and that would undoubtedly bring us the support of President Carter that we very much needed in order to move forward. Not only a bill but eventually land acquisition. I remember getting a lot of help from Congressman [John F.] Seiberling's office. They had carried the Cuyahoga protection forward and they had been through these ropes. Their staff people were very helpful to me in telling me all the things I needed to do to be sure that the legislation flowed smoothly through the various committees and had the relevant support from outside that would bring other people into support of this.

One thing I particularly remember was the advice that we publish an article in the National Parks and Conservation Association magazine because we could come up with gorgeous pictures of an area and it makes it look good and [shows] that this is really a beautiful and important place to preserve. I spent quite a long time working on that article, talking to the people at the National Parks and Conservation Association about doing such an article, having Tony's by-line there to promote this park, getting advice from them as to what the article should contain, and so on. I worked through various drafts and then made enough reprints to put a copy on every congressperson's desk--and I think probably the senators' desks, too. I know at some point the support in the Senate

was very important and [Catherine Files and others] in [Alan] Cranston's office were helpful to us in that regard.

It seems in looking back at the whole process as though it was very easy and very smooth, although my husband would tell you that there were many nights when I was on the phone well after our dinnertime when people in Southern California had just finished their dinner and suddenly thought, Oh, now would be a good time to call Gail, to call her and tell her what's going on out here and what we're worried about and what we need to have Tony do in order to resolve whatever local friction there was about plans for the Park. You'll notice, I'm sure, in looking at the legislation, that initially we included protection of the Channel Islands in it. Eventually we dropped that in deference to Rep. Lagomarsino in whose district the Channel Islands were. There was a graceful backing off and letting him solve the various problems involved in bringing the Channel Islands into protection. But we had done, and continued to do, quite a lot of work to deal with those issues and build support in California and throughout the country to bring about protection for the Channel Islands. The fight and problems [for the Santa Monicas], of course, didn't stop with the passage of the bill, but have gone on for years trying to get appropriations.

I guess what I should say is that Beilenson worked with his staff in such a way as to protect us from politics as much as possible, and solved the political problems himself. I can't tell you all of whatever inside stories there might be.

This wasn't in reference to the Santa Monicas, but I remember at one point working on an issue that had something to do with the environment. At the beginning, he had asked my advice and I said, "Well, politically this might be what you might do," and he said, "Don't tell me about the politics. Just tell me what's the right thing to do." So he didn't want, or need, political advice from us. He had a pretty good sense and the right instincts on those issues. But he did want his staff to tell him what we thought was the right thing to do, what was good for the environment.

So I always had a tremendous amount of freedom to move forward in the way that seemed to make the most sense and seemed to be the right thing to do. He took care of the political problems. And he really did deal directly with other congressmen and senators. My job was to get the staff work done, communicate with constituents, and if there were problems and friction, hear that and try to resolve them. And also to bring things to his attention that he needed to know about and not bother him with the things he didn't need to know about. I usually went in to his office at the very end of the day when things weren't quite so crazy to sit down and ask him the few questions I needed to know or get a few letters signed that needed to be signed, make the few decisions that needed to be made, and move on. I didn't, in some ways, spend great amounts of time with him. I think he was very supportive of environmental issues, but they weren't always the ones in which he wanted to dot all the i's and cross all the t's.

I have these fragments of memory. I remember touring the whole Park, and looking at all the different sections of it, and talking of all the problems of connecting the different parts of it--how much more difficult it was in the eastern sections of the Park to preserve this land than it was in the western part where we had large parts of the community carved out as state parks. I remember spending a great deal of time on the phone with Susan Nelson and on various meetings back in the district with Susan Nelson

and Margot Feuer and many of the others who were actively involved. They really helped us and did the work. I guess that's about all I can think of.

PITT: Well, that's a very good beginning. I've scribbled some notes and I have anticipated some questions. I want to take you back in time. When you were first hired by Beilenson, what was your professional and academic background, and why was that what he wanted for this work?

OSHERENKO: I had gone to law school, essentially because I wanted to work in the environmental field. I wanted to save the environment. I was very much a '60s person and activist, and my issues were about environment. I had gone to law school at the University of California, Davis, primarily to do environmental work. I had actually done some interning in Beilenson's office during my first year of law school, but probably not more than six hours a week. I can't remember. I had worked as a volunteer, so I knew some people in the office. I really didn't know Beilenson. I'm sure I had met him but had very little contact. And he represented my home district, the district that I came from and in which my mother lived up until she moved to Santa Barbara during the time I was in law school. She wasn't living there at the time when I actually started working for him in 1975, but she had been earlier, and it was a district that I was familiar with.

As I understand it, he hired me because he had been asked by environmental groups to carry the California Coastal Act, a very thick document. The California Coastal Plan had been prepared by committee. That document was to be converted into a massive piece of legislation that would eventually become the California Coastal Act. They had asked Tony to carry that legislation and he didn't have anybody with environmental expertise on his staff. So I suppose when I came along and was looking for a job I learned from friends that there was a possibility that Beilenson might be hiring somebody. I went in and inquired about that, I suppose using the people I already knew, and having other friends who worked in the Legislature contact their office to give me a good recommendation. I was thrilled to get the job.

PITT: I can imagine.

OSHERENKO: I also learned at the time that he was hiring, that he really wanted to hire a man, and that was due to the fact that he had quite a few women working in his office. The men that he'd had working there as his legislative assistants had all left or were leaving. I think there was only one at the time. He was really looking for a little gender balance in the office. I got wind of that after I had interviewed and I was afraid that I wouldn't get the job. He told me he would make a decision a week or two later. I bumped into him totally by chance when I was visiting another friend in the Legislature. I couldn't help but blurt out that I'd heard that he thought he should hire a man, and I thought it shouldn't have anything to do with his decision. Then, on going home, I thought, Now I've really blown it. I was very happy when I got the job.

PITT: Obviously, you hadn't blown it. Had you had any training in science, in the environmental sciences?

OSHERENKO: My high school biology courses largely dealt with ecology. I attended Principia Upper School, a school for Christian Scientists. So when other people were studying health sciences and anatomy and dissecting things, I was studying ecology and marking off quadrants and studying what they were about. So I had a lot of preparation in my high school biology course and I took some biology in college, but not a large amount. My major was in English at Principia College, located in Southern Illinois. I had taken ornithology and various other courses--basic biology--but I did not have a strong background in the sciences. Probably the most useful thing I had studied was a course at the law school in legislation where we studied the process of making and writing legislation. We had to pick an issue and write a bill. I wrote a bill that I'll never forget. The teacher's comment afterward was, "This is like Kafka's *Castle.*" [laughter] I had just put everything in it and, of course, it would have been impossible to pass. But it was a great lesson because I wasn't so tempted to do that by the time I actually got a job working on legislation.

PITT: And so at the time you did live on the westside of L.A.?

OSHERENKO: I was born and raised in Los Angeles. In Beverly Hills at 1005 Alpine Drive.

PITT: This is indeed a good beginning. I want to mention a few things that were happening in Sacramento when you got there and see if they ring any bells. We're talking about the mid-1970s. Jerry Brown was governor. A Backbone Trail bill had been introduced and Trippett Ranch had been added to Topanga State Park. A group of landholders calling themselves Advocates for Better Coastal Development were active in resisting certain directions that the park development was going in. And the U.S. Bureau of Recreation had recommended that the state control the Santa Monica Mountains, rather than the feds. Those were some of the things that were going on in Sacramento at the time. So, if I ask you again about the scene in Sacramento when you got there, does this ring any bells that you want to answer?

OSHERENKO: I think everything you say is accurate. I don't remember being very involved in those issues when I was still in Sacramento. I was so focused on the coastal work. What I remember about the Santa Monicas in that connection is that a lot of time on the coastal bill was spent trying to work through the issues of local government and local communities. One of the biggest issues was where the line would be drawn as to what would be included within the California Coastal Act--what the jurisdiction of these various coastal commissions would be. My recollection is that we tried--and I think we succeeded--in putting a large part of the Santa Monica Mountains [within the jurisdiction of the Coastal Commission]. So my work with the Santa Monicas at that time was this sort of overlap of things that Beilenson himself was taking care of.

I really don't know whether Tony was backing national legislation for park protection [in the Legislature]. It seemed the obvious thing to do, certainly at the time that he was a congressman.

PITT: Well, maybe we'll come back to that in a moment. I wanted to also mention that California created a State Planning Commission in the late 1970s to formulate a general plan for the mountains area, and to give that commission some money to give as grants to local governments. Eventually, if I understand it correctly, this evolved into the Conservancy. In any event, there was a state plan that had been developed. Were you working on that, or was that a *fait accompli* when you got there?

OSHERENKO: I think that was a *fait accompli* when I got there. I don't remember much about it. I remember it was going on, but I can't remember enough to tell you about it.

PITT: Don't worry about it. I know it's a long time, and a lot of confusing issues [were involved].

OSHERENKO: Twenty years ago. I can tell you I was young enough, and green enough about all of this so that probably I did things without understanding all the implications, or knowing all of the fights that had gone on.

PITT: I'm sure that trying to remember names is even doubly difficult but I do have in front of me a list of people who were involved with the State Planning Commission and some of them were the movers and shakers. I hear you already saying you were not terribly involved on that level. But I'll just go down the list and see if that rings any bells. Just stop me and tell me what you know and if not, I'll just keep going. One is Marvin Braude who was the chair of the State Planning Commission, if I understand it, and later a city councilman and just now retired from the City Council.

OSHERENKO: I certainly remember his name. He was an important figure.

PITT: I see. Kathleen Gordon, Linda Burge, Ron Blank, Abe Levy, who [I think may have been] a labor attorney, and Manuel Orozco. Here are a couple who might be memorable. One would be Bill Press who, I think, was already a prominent Democratic Party activist and leader and a media person, Joel Wachs, another L.A. city councilman-to-be, and Baxter Ward, who was a television personality and subsequently an L.A. county supervisor. Did you have any connection with them specifically?

OSHERENKO: Tony would have, because in a way they were all political people or media people. They would have had direct contact with him.

PITT: And not you?

OSHERENKO: I have to pass on those.

PITT: Understood. A now famous name in mountain policy issues is Joseph T. Edmiston, who was the staff of that commission and is now the executive director of the Conservancy. Did you have anything to do with him or his staff?

OSHERENKO: [I had quite a bit of contact with Joe Edmiston in relation to the Santa Monica Mountains but cannot recall the specifics. Hopefully Joe will be able to fill you in on his role.] Have you talked to Joe?

PITT: Yes, I have, and he's been very cordial. He and I have an agreement for me to interview him a little later on. . . .

OSHERENKO: Wasn't he active for a long time with the California Coastal Commission?

PITT: It sounds quite plausible. I'm sure he had something to do with it.

OSHERENKO: There were two people who literally held my hand as we tried to move the California Coastal Act into being. The most important one was [Joseph] Joe Petrillo. The other one was Peter Douglas.

PITT: Peter Douglas?

OSHERENKO: Who I believe is either with the California Coastal Commission or the [San Francisco] Bay Area Commission.

PITT: His name is not familiar to me.

OSHERENKO: I needed a lot of help. They had both been very involved in the preparation of the California Coastal Plan which was the basis for the Coastal Act, and they worked very closely with our office on the Coastal Act. Eventually, the bill that we had drafted for coastal protection failed in one of the committees. But Joe [Petrillo] had seen to it that Senator Smith introduced a bill which had the right qualifications, so that if anything happened to the Beilenson bill, we could dump the whole Coastal Act into it and the Beilenson bill wouldn't be lost. And that's what happened.

So he [Petrillo] was very, very knowledgeable politically in the workings of the California Legislature, and really understood the kind of deals that had to be cut with local governments, and all the different players who had to be satisfied in order to move a piece of legislation of that size. He was a very good guy and tremendously helpful. And [I'm] very grateful [to him] about letting somebody who was as young and inexperienced as I was--to be running the show on the Coastal Act early on--and gracefully making sure that I didn't bungle it too badly.

PITT: Now at the time you had your law degree?

OSHERENKO: Yes.

PITT: So they were looking to you for legal policy relative to environmental matters.

OSHERENKO: Right.

PITT: Then you went to Congress with the newly elected Anthony Beilenson in 1977. Is that correct?

OSHERENKO: Right.

PITT: So the scene changes completely now. When you got there various bills had already been before committee and proposed among congressmen and senators and you were not coming into a *tabula rasa* scene. There were [Robert J.] Lagomarsino and Barry Goldwater, Jr., and those players had already done a lot of thinking and political dealing. When you came into the middle of it, what was your responsibility at that time?

OSHERENKO: To draft a bill that could be introduced with Tony's name on it. To do whatever it took in terms of staff work to communicate with the people who were pushing for this in the district.

PITT: And by now the issue was, presumably, a national park that would include the Channel Islands--at least at first when you got there. Is that how it was on the table?

OSHERENKO: Yes, since the Channel Islands are just an extension of the Santa Monica Mountains, only covered by water. You know, it's interesting. We carried that bill forward even after the passage of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. In the 96th Congress there was a Beilenson bill to establish the Channel Islands National Monument to preserve the seashore after 1979. I would guess that your historical study doesn't extend to that.

PITT: Yes, it does. It should. Anything you can think about up to 1979, when you shifted over to a different place, let's hear it.

OSHERENKO: I can't remember that much, except that eventually we did a lot of work on this bill in 1979. We must have done an awful lot of work prior to that, and then afterward, in order to move the Santa Monica Mountains. Well, a couple of things. One is that the National Parks and Conservation Association never felt that the Santa Monica Mountains really qualified in that same category as the crown jewels like Yosemite. So they didn't want to put the word "park" into the bill and wanted it to be a "recreation area."

PITT: This is an important point. Let's deal with it. There were various people in the know, and people who were pressuring for laws, and people in the grassroots who wanted a national park, and others who wanted something less than a national park, and maybe some who didn't want any of it. So you found yourself in the midst of it, and where did you come down, or where did Beilenson come down?

OSHERENKO: He came down on the side of practicality. He wasn't going to get the backing of even the biggest supporters of parks such as the National Parks and Conservation Association for a national park. He seemed to make those decisions with a lot of ease. He must have felt some disappointment at the time, knowing who he was, but

ultimately the point was to protect the land, to get a designation, and to be able to go on with that position. So the thing to do was to move it forward. And I think one of the decisions made pretty early on was to move it forward as a national recreation area [rather than as a national park]. You can probably tell by looking at various drafts made that hopefully are preserved in the files, [to see] when the title shifts on the bill. And also you can probably tell when we dropped the Channel Islands part of it, and just went with only the [Santa Monica Mountains National] Recreation Area.

PITT: One thing I did notice in the files was an article that Beilenson wrote--it had his by-line certainly--for the *National Parks and Recreation* magazine and was called "What Future for the Santa Monicas?" I think you already mentioned it. Why don't you explain what your connection was with that article?

OSHERENKO: Well, as I said, I was advised by Seiberling's people that we needed to have something like this to distribute to everybody to make the case. We spent a lot of time on it. I think Tony spent a lot of time on it, too--to find out what should be in it, and getting together photographs. I no longer have a copy of it in my files. Does it have color photographs in it?

PITT: What I have has black-and-white photographs. I think it's a Xerox. Do you want me to look it up and send it to you for a souvenir?

OSHERENKO: I'd love it. One of the things I did was to go out there and take lots of photographs myself and I had them hanging up in my office--big blowups. We tried to get attention in the media and editorials written, and that sort of thing. One of the jobs of a legislative assistant is to encourage the media, too, and to provide them with information so that they write accurately. Anyway, I'm sure I wrote the draft of that article and I can tell you that Tony would have gone over every word and probably made changes in every paragraph. He might even have reorganized it. He's a very good writer and puts his style on anything that has his name on it. But I won't deny that if this had been in academe it would have had more than one name on it. [laughter] I don't know whose name would have been first. You understand when you write for a congressman that you write things that are never going to have your name on them.

PITT: One thing I do know is, that the 1978 article contrasts with the idea of the Tunney and Cranston-sponsored bill on the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Urban National Park. So something definitely had shifted between 1975 and 1978.

Now, let me ask you, you already mentioned Susan Nelson, Margot Feuer and the importance of grassroots activity in all of this. One thing I'm discovering in my reading and research is that not only was it the question of congressional leadership and so on, but this was very much a grassroots issue, and that you had the responsibility of communicating with them. Can you tell us a little more about their involvement and your relationship with them?

OSHERENKO: They did all the work, and I was the go-between.

PITT: [laughter] Okay. That states it very succinctly.

OSHERENKO: I suppose my job sometimes was as a peacemaker, and a conflict resolver, and to keep everybody happy and not irritated with each other, and working toward the common goal of getting this park created.

PITT: Was there any one conflict that you remember that needed your intervention, as an example?

OSHERENKO: I can't really remember. I think any of the big decisions that had to be made concerning the direction the bill was going to take, would have passed through me [by] Susan Nelson telling me what the issues were, what people were concerned about, what she was concerned about, and how she wanted to have it resolved. I might be hearing from others by telephone or letters, you know, constituent letters, or we might have been getting pressured by this or that organization. I was the one with the access to be able to walk into Tony's office at the end of the day and say, "This is what's going on. What do you want to do?" and then reporting it back to whomever. I was a kind of go-between, and I'm sure the decision to say, "Okay, we're going to drop the word 'park' and go with 'recreation' would have been that kind of decision. [It would be] where the decision to create this as a park with the idea that the state parks would be linked together but the federal acquisition would go on all around it, and that there would be a lot of acquisition and that we weren't going to try to do this with zoning, and buying easements and development rights, and various kinds of regulations. It was going to be a straight-forward, if you will, Republican approach to preserving the land. Identify the pieces you want to buy, and might be able to buy, and keep pressing for the funding to be there in the land-and-water acquisition fund to buy it.

PITT: And there wasn't going to be a fiat from on top to draw a line around it and say, "This is now a national park and everything in here is to be treated as in Yosemite, or such."

OSHERENKO: The legislation such as was used in the Adirondack park was the other model--that you use various ways of controlling development while still leaving the land in private ownership, but restricting its . . .

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: So was the Adirondack model the one that was adopted when you went to the national recreation area model?

OSHERENKO: No. One issue was whether or not this was going to be a recreational area or a park, and that's really just a question of whether it's enough of a crown jewel to give it this name, "Park." None of this changed the way in which it acquired or managed the land**.** And the other issue, which is quite separate, is whether you go about creating it as a park by acquiring the land and having it be open to public usage, or whether you're trying to preserve land, much of which is still held in private ownership but the development rights have been severed. The development rights have been purchased at some lower cost to the government, so that the land remains open land but is not necessarily open for recreation and not used in the same way. There are a lot of different configurations, but it's much more complicated to do that kind of land preservation and my impression is that Tony looked at the political lineup and said, The simple, easy way to do this--what we would call the salient solution--is to make it a recreation area. [We could do this] through straightforward acquisition, and not try to use a variety of other land management tools to create open space in the Santa Monica Mountains. For instance, you might compare the legislation sponsored by Senator Tsongas for Lowell [National Historical Park], in Massachusetts. I think [he] may have used some of those other tools. But we just decided to go with the [recreation area] That was probably in line with what Susan Nelson, and Margot Feuer and other people who were interested, wanted. And to what degree other people really understood the other techniques, because they were fairly new in those days, [I don't know].

PITT: Am I right in thinking that that resembled the Cuyahoga model to some degree?

OSHERENKO: Yes. We were certainly advised by Seiberling that that was the way to go.

PITT: That helps. It's clear from everyone I've spoken with, and from books, and so on, that the genius behind the Omnibus Bill of 1978 was Congressman Phil Burton. I don't know whether you've had a chance to read John Jacobs' biography of Phil Burton, *A Rage for Justice*.

OSHERENKO: I didn't. I'd like to.

PITT: Put that on your list. It is certainly interesting. Did you have any direct contact with him?

OSHERENKO: I think he knew who I was and I knew who he was, but no.

PITT: That was about it?

OSHERENKO: Tony and Phil Burton were very good friends. I didn't have a lot of contact with him. I must have had quite a bit of contact with his staff people on the Committee, though I can't say that I remember a whole lot.

PITT: But was it your impression that it was his genius that had so much to do with this?

OSHERENKO: He was enormously supportive. What we would do is present him with the part of the legislation that had to do with the Santa Monica Mountains and he was going to put it in the Omnibus Bill.

PITT: I was going to say that part of this interview process is to remember people who will be forgotten but deserve to be remembered. Are there other staff people, either for Beilenson or anyone else, that you would like remember.

OSHERENKO: I think I mentioned Cathy Files who was in Cranston's office. I wish I could remember the name of the woman who was in Seiberling's office.

PITT: I might be able to track that down and run it by you on another occasion.

OSHERENKO: I would recognize the names of people, but I'm not sure I can remember everyone who should be recognized.

PITT: But the Seiberling people seem to have been important to you in this process.

OSHERENKO: Yes, they were. And I think he was wonderfully helpful.

PITT: Let me just mention a name here, a title--Sierra Club. Did you have any connection with them, and if so, what were they about?

OSHERENKO: I'm sure we did, but I can't remember. The other person who I was thinking about who could probably tell you more about why we went to national recreation area is the guy who headed the National Parks and Conservation Association, or who was their chief staff person at that time. He's probably not a person who would remember the Santa Monicas, as such, but they were sort of the guardians and keepers of the sanctity of national parks and they were certainly the ones who pushed us into making it a recreation area. It's interesting reading your historical [chronology], that it had been called an urban park. It must have been that that was a popular notion that somehow was no longer so important, or else that people just didn't feel that the Santa Monicas were an urban park. I'm curious what Susan Nelson would tell you about that. I don't remember using that "urban" word.

PITT: It does creep in to the rhetoric of people supporting the Park in about 1975 to emphasize how many pristine areas there still were...

OSHERENKO: . . . in [the midst of] a large population.

PITT: Yes, very close to this burgeoning metropolis, and how important it was not to let it go by the boards.

OSHERENKO: And certainly that had something to do with trying to retain the eastern part of the Park within the bill and not lop it off and say, Well, we'll just focus on the coastal [area] and bring some pressure that way.

There was a lot of discussion about what should be in it, where the line would be, how the map would look. I spent a lot of my conversations, back and forth, with Susan Nelson and others, with getting this map right.

PITT: Yes, she worked on a map and that became very important in subsequent policy discussions.

OSHERENKO: And I think people in the local office also had a great deal to do with that.

PITT: You mean in Los Angeles in the Beilenson office?

OSHERENKO: Yes. There's a couple of names I should remember, that should be in here. Linda . . .?

PITT: Linda Friedman?

OSHERENKO: Linda Friedman. I really worked with her very closely.

PITT: I had a conversation with her and she remembered you very fondly.

OSHERENKO: And we had an intern during some of this, Felicia Marcus, who may have gone back to work in the district office.

PITT: Maybe she stayed on after your tour was finished.

OSHERENKO: She did. And then there was another woman even after her who picked up and was responsible for looking after getting the money. The land acquisition was the central focus.

PITT: That became, and still is, a problem. I'm flashing back on my questions. So by this time you were married, and were living in Washington, and that is where you had your home.

OSHERENKO: Right.

PITT: And among other things, you had to cope with the three-hour time gap, and so your work continued well on into the evening.

OSHERENKO: Yes. Don't worry, I didn't always show up in the office at 9 o'clock in the morning. I'd take a little personal time on the other end of the day.

PITT: I see.

OSHERENKO: I don't think people understood me very well, but believe me, there were plenty of staffers on the California delegation who probably worked on Los Angeles time. And Los Angeles overtime. [laughter]

PITT: We've touched on this a little bit here, but there were very big stake holders in the private sector in the mountains. There were land developers and oil-drilling companies, and residents. Did you have any instructions about meeting their demands? Did you have any moments when you had to deal with them when you, say, dealt with constituents, and if so, what sort of responses did you give to them?

OSHERENKO: You know, I didn't remember very much of that. I really don't.

PITT: It might have come to someone else in the Beilenson organization. But it didn't come to you?

OSHERENKO: I think we had our plan, and it was fairly straightforward. In creating a park you don't necessarily identify every little parcel. You know, as you begin the acquisition process, I think the issues become more and more specific, so the fact that we were drawing a line around the whole area [included] understanding that not everything within that would be bought. I wish I could remember more of those debates.

PITT: As I say, there is at least one organization, by name, that I know of, that I think I mentioned but, I can't remember the name right at the moment. But there must have been other individuals who showed up. Advocates for Better Coastal Development. Also, Concerned Citizens for Local Government, who were 15 land holders who were trying to get mountains development that was more suitable to their idea.

OSHERENKO: It would be interesting if you found in the historical record what sort of letters that they might have in the organizations from our office. Or if we have copies of letters back to constituents.

PITT: I have looked, but I haven't found anything. But maybe it's hidden there somewhere.

OSHERENKO: I didn't save any of these files. One of the jobs as a legislative assistant, at least in our office, was everybody in our office answered constituent mail. I basically had to draft all the letters to constituents that had anything to do with environmental concerns, whether that was Santa Monica Mountains or energy bills, or whatever. So I think a lot of my job was to draft letters that Beilenson felt comfortable signing, that deflected too much animosity and yet was candid about our position.

PITT: Yes.

OSHERENKO: I guess if we had really direct contact it might show up in the correspondence.

PITT: Well, maybe it's worth another look.

OSHERENKO: I probably did have contact with people who were antagonistic to the park idea, or people who had interest in lands there, or lands that they didn't want to be included in the Park, but I don't have much recollection exactly. I suspect that once a decision was made to use the sort of standard draw-a-line-around-this-area-and-then-we'll-figure-out-exactly-what-parcels-are-to-be-bought-later, I was somewhat removed from specific decisions that were to be made later. So it might have been a concept they may really have opposed, but we would have felt we were going to get this bill in its current form. We would have tried to be courteous about it, but essentially we would have wanted the bill passed.

PITT: So maybe they had to watch also as to which parcels were in and which were out. And I'm sure they were alert to this later on.

OSHERENKO: I just don't think all of those issues were there then. It's a very different process from what I was involved in with the Coastal Act where I remember very lengthy meetings with representatives of local governments. And meetings with the Port Authority people, and meetings with the different industrial sectors. There were various chapters in those bills, and their interests were going to be reflected by what was in the Coastal Act and what the regulations were. But when you create a park it's much more straightforward, and I think that's why the decision was to do this as a straightforward recreation area acquisition. You designate it, you buy it and you deflect the concerns until a later stage. It made it politically a lot easier.

[I'd like to add a comment about Joe Petrillo.] He was very involved in the California Coastal Act and he did staff work that brought the Act into being, and then was involved on the staff of the Coastal Commission. I think he may have been the director of it or something. I left California at that point, and once I left Beilenson's office, I really left a lot of people behind and lost track of people. I don't think Joe Petrillo was involved at all in the Santa Monica Mountains. So he would only have figured in the fact that when we worked on the Coastal Act that we tried to draw the lines of the Coastal Act's jurisdiction to include much of the Santa Monicas.

PITT: Okay.

OSHERENKO: In every place that the California Act went inland, there was a huge fight. In some areas you look at the jurisdiction it had originally, it's a little thin strip on the coast; in other places it cut deeply inland. There was a lot of fighting after I left California about that. I suspect some of those boundaries have been changed over the years, but I don't know.

PITT: What I understand, as a general answer to this, is that the Coastal Commission dealt with the conservation and preservation of the area closest to the ocean and that the Conservancy dealt with the inland part, and they were supposed to be cooperative and

following the same philosophy, and that line eventually got adjusted between the two of them.

OSHERENKO: Yes. I suppose that's right. I can't remember. Anyway, I remember having a lot of fun talking to Joe Edmiston. I remember him being a very nice guy. I can't remember a whole lot more. I think he stayed quite involved in this afterward.

PITT: Yes. He remains the principal figure in the state agency, the Conservancy, which gives grants to local entities, municipalities, and so on, and which also buys land and turns it over, in some cases, to the National Park Service. So the lands [form a] bridge and [are] very important in the story to this moment.

Was there anything more that you wanted to say? It seems to me I may have cut you off on the Channel Islands idea. Here's how I see it, and tell me if I'm wrong. Initially, the Channel Islands were connected with all the bills having to do with a national park or national recreation area, but eventually became a separate piece of legislation, maybe under the direction of Lagomarsino of Ventura, and possibly also Barry Goldwater, Jr. Is that something that sounds [right] as you look back over it?

OSHERENKO: That that's what happened?

PITT: Yes.

OSHERENKO: I kind of look at these things and it's not so important who did them as that they got done.

PITT: And it did get done.

OSHERENKO: You know, historically, it's hard to say. There were some real problems with the protection of the Channel Islands because one of the islands was almost entirely privately owned and you really needed to have the cooperation of the owner's family. Probably, we were maybe well off to not have to resolve all those things at the same time. It was politically difficult and probably Lagomarsino needed to protect those interests of those landowners and resolve those in his district. At any rate, at some point I remember being a little surprised at the time--and I'm sure disappointed at the time--that Beilenson said we're going to have to lop off that part of the bill and leave it for Lagomarsino to do in the future. And what's interesting is that I must have stayed very involved in it, because the one file I do still have is the file on the Channel Islands bill after it had been separated, and various notes. I have a memo that I wrote to Felicia Marcus, called 'More Notes on the Channel Islands Preserve-Conflict or Overlap with O.C.S. Leasing Program?' I could send you the stuff in this file.

PITT: Please.

OSHERENKO: It's kind of interesting. It probably would give you a sense of what a legislative assistant does.

PITT: That would be good because it might not be in the main file.

OSHERENKO: One of our jobs is to work with whatever federal agencies have some interest or conflict with what the legislation is, and to work those out so that we deflect opposition to the bill. I might have a memo about those things related to the Channel Islands.

PITT: I'd like to get that.

OSHERENKO: I at one time had a huge thick file on the Santa Monicas but I'm sure I left all of that in the office.

PITT: There is a good archive. Tony Beilenson left his papers to UCLA but there are a lot of gaps.

OSHERENKO: [laughter] Do you think we threw it away?

PITT: No. But I sort of think the main thing was that with a lot of these things you were just working from one phone call to the next.

OSHERENKO: Absolutely!

PITT: And not everything gets recorded so neatly for posterity when that's happening.

OSHERENKO: Yes. One of the things that was going on in this memo about the Channel Islands was that at one point it carried the title "Marine Park." That was taken out so that we didn't have problems with the wrong agencies and the wrong committees having control over it. So there are a lot of little details like that that make up the life of the legislative assistant.

PITT: When the legislative assistant goes back now to Southern California and you go to Santa Barbara and you go to L.A. and you look around, what does it feel like to see the old turf?

OSHERENKO: I wish I could say I've had more chance to be in it and enjoy it than I have. But I can tell you that every time I fly into Los Angeles or over it, as I did this summer, I'm glued to the window looking at the mountains and appreciating that they are still as undeveloped as they are.

PITT: Yes. Although when you get down on the ground, in some respects, there is a lot more development than you would have hoped back then.

OSHERENKO: Than there was at that time. I think it's been really disappointing and a long fight. You know, I was the lucky one. I got to say, "Well, we did that!" Then I walked away leaving Susan Nelson and Margot Feuer and Joe Edmiston and all the rest

of them, and Tony, to continue year after year to battle for money and fight development and try to preserve something for the future, [for] the lungs of Los Angeles.

PITT: The lungs of Los Angeles. Good phrase. Now you did mention some of the things you've done since that time, or what happened, let's say, starting in 1979. Can you give us briefly an overview of where you went and what you've been doing since then?

OSHERENKO: After I left the office?

PITT: Right.

OSHERENKO: The job that I went to when I left was with the Department of Justice, in the Land and Natural Resources Division, and I was a member of the legal staff in the Appellate section. So I did primarily environmental or land, natural resources cases, defending the various agencies of the federal government, only in the Appellate Court I dealt with a very different range of issues, and I also dealt with a lot of Native American and Indian laws. I found that to be a little bit stifling and managed to get myself loaned from my Justice Department job to the Council on Environmental Quality. I worked as a staff attorney under the legal counsel of the Council on Environmental Quality for five months while my salary was paid by the Department of Justice. That's how the Council on Environmental Quality got to be as large a staff as it was. Through lots of loans from other agencies. By that time I had married my current husband, and we decided that we were going to move to Vermont where his family lived and where his brother had started an organization called the Center for Northern Studies, that's a year of college level and postgraduate level education related to the Arctic and sub-Arctic.

The center is located on land known as the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where the tree species and the plants and shrubs are essentially identical to land about 1,000 miles farther north in wild Canada. It's a good study region because we have a lot more light--a lot more hours of daylight to study these things, but equally cold temperatures. So anyway, we moved up to Vermont. I was looking for a different kind of life style and an appropriate place to have children and to raise them, and I guess I had just been moving for a long time away from the city life I had grown up with. Maybe my move to Davis was part of that, and then my move to Vermont was a continuation. I got more and more involved in the center for Northern Studies. I taught a class called, Law of the North, in which we did environmental law, Native law, and a little international environmental law.

PITT: This was at Dartmouth?

OSHERENKO: No. This was all at the Center for Northern Studies. Eventually, my husband and I discovered that we could not raise large grant money for a small institute that was free-standing like the Center for Northern Studies. The center still exists and my husband is still on its board and my brother-in-law is still running it. But we decided that we really couldn't get funding that way, so we moved the operation to Dartmouth College and Oran was involved in creating the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth where I currently work.

I guess I skipped a step, because when I first came to Vermont I wanted to be able to be a member of the bar here, so I had to stay out of the state until I had practiced law for five years. So a friend of mine, Durwood Zaelke, whom I had worked with many years before as an intern when I was in law school, was then running the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund office in Alaska. He hired me for 11 weeks. I moved to Alaska and practiced law up there, out of that office, until I had practiced law for five years. Then I moved [back] to Vermont. I clerked in Vermont for the Vermont Natural Resources Council, which was a statewide environmental organization, basically working on an environmental impact study case involving highways that they had on appeal to the Second Circuit. I did that for an internship and I did some other work on wetlands for them. I worked for that organization for a while later, and was on their board of directors. But eventually I became more involved in academia and ended up at Dartmouth.

Today I'm still doing various sorts of research primarily on indigenous rights and environmental issues in the Arctic, and I have a book that is going to come out early next year called *Siberian Survival: The Nenets and Their Story,* about native people of northwest Siberia and their struggles with oil and gas development--changes in the shift from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation. I'm also on the Water Resources Board for the state of Vermont, which makes the rules for water use, abuse of public waters, and water quality standards for the state of Vermont. We're an appellate body for decisions from the State Agency of Natural Resources related to water. That's what I do. That's more or less traditional environmental law.

PITT: Well, you've had a fascinating career, and I see by the very last point, that you must have something to do with the quality of the water that goes into Ben and Jerry's ice cream.

OSHERENKO: [laughter] Well, we haven't had a case yet dealing with Ben and Jerry's, and I hope we never do. I do enjoy their ice cream. And I have to say that I think it's due to Anthony Beilenson that I got such a good start in a wonderful environmental career that's been interesting and taken me to a lot of interesting places.

PITT: That's a wonderful thought.

OSHERENKO: I still think of California a lot, and wish I could be back there to hike in those mountains. Maybe I will be soon.

PITT: I certainly hope so. And I'm going to tell Tony what you said. Is there anything else you would like to say before we end? Did I get you to talk long enough?

OSHERENKO: Yes. You got me to talk much longer than I thought I could have, and I still think that looking at this I had very little that I really remembered.

PITT: It's interesting. Everybody has said that, and yet everybody has contributed a lot. Maybe we'll come back to you with a few more questions. I do want to congratulate you on your effort on behalf of the Santa Monica Mountain parkland area. Every time I go

there I am in awe. And, also, to thank you very much for the interview. It worked out just fine.

OSHERENKO: You're welcome. And I will send you copies of some of this material that I have on the Channel Islands. It will give you a little fragment of an idea of the kind of thing that I worked on and maybe a little more on some of the others.

PITT: Good. I will look for that. And I will send you a copy of the article in the National Parks and Conservation magazine.

OSHERENKO: Good. And I look forward to your sending me a copy of what you finally produced from this--hopefully, early enough that if it jogs anything more, I can let you know.

PITT: Okay. I'll do it as quickly as I can, and I'm going to look forward to your book, too.

OSHERENKO: Good.

PITT: Okay?

OSHERENKO: Okay. Thank you.

PITT: Great to talk to you. Bye.

OSHERENKO: Bye.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— XIII —

PHIL BURTON'S "SMOKEY THE BEAR"

An Interview with Cleve Pinnix

Cleve Pinnix worked for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. when he was assigned as a legislative aide to Congressman Philip Burton. He also served as Director of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Professor Leonard Pitt interviewed him by phone on August 17, 1999.

Interviewee: Cleve Pinnix
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: This is Leonard Pitt interviewing Mr. Cleve Pinnix. I am in Los Angeles. He is at his work place in Olympia, Washington. It is August 17, 1999. We have agreed to call each other Cleve and Len or Leonard. So, Cleve, just to make sure that the recording level is right, why don't you tell me what the weather is like today in Washington State.

PINNIX: Sure, Len. That's easy. Up here it's like it is 12 months a year. I'm looking out the window at gray skies. The fact that it is mid-August just means that its warmer gray skies than it is in December or January. How's our recording level doing?

PITT: That's perfect. Cleve, what I would like you to do, please, is to tell your story, taking as much time as you can, about your involvement with Phillip Burton at the time when the Omnibus Parks Bill was being crafted. Our main interest here is the Santa Monica Mountains portion. But I would like to hear from you, because you have a very special point of view as an aid to Phillip Burton, how it looked from the trenches. And so once you have taken your time to give us the narrative I will ask you some questions. And before we get into that major theme, could you just tell us a little bit about yourself by way of background: Where you were born and raised, went to school, how you came into [the] Park Service, and that sort of thing?

PINNIX: That'll be fine Len. That's the easy way to get me going. I'm a North Carolina native. I grew up in the western mountains of North Carolina, and I wound up going into the National Park Service as [a] National Park ranger way back in the middle 1960s. I was actually finishing up a degree at North Carolina State University with the intention of going on into graduate school. I had my career laid out that I was probably going into college teaching in English literature. I happened to get a summer job on the Blue Ridge Parkway as a seasonal ranger and found that someone would actually pay you a salary to be out in the outdoors. That changed things for me.

I went back to school and picked up as much natural science as I could and became Smoky the Bear. After working at Mt. Rainier National Park out here in Washington State and Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky, even at Statue of Liberty National Monument in New York Harbor for a while, the Department of the

Interior picked me up and sent me and my family down to Washington D.C. for a year's assignment. It was something called the Departmental Manager Development Program. They pulled a couple of people out of each agency in the Department of the Interior that they sort of wanted to push into management development and they turned us loose on the federal government for a year. During that year's time I took an internship on Capitol Hill. That was something that you commonly did, and at the end of the internship I got a job offer. It turned out that the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation was undergoing a change in staff. The person that had been the staffer for the committee was being promoted to being general counsel for the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, so they had a need for the staff consultant on the [National Parks and Recreation] subcommittee and I was offered the job. At that point I left the National Park Service. My thought was that as a person with a field background in the National Parks I felt like, perhaps, I could bring a little different perspective to the congressional staff work than the folks that were there that had mainly training in the law as their background.

So I went to work for that subcommittee in mid-1974 [with the title of consultant]. That may be sort of interesting from my perspective on the Santa Monica Mountains issue. Since I was a career National Park Service person by background I brought that Park Service view into the job. At that time in the mid-'70s, there was a very substantial debate going on in the Congress and in the National Park Service itself, about the role of the National Parks in urban areas. [It involved such parks as] Gateway National Recreation Area in the New York area, Golden Gate National Recreation Area that Phil Burton authored that went through Congress in 1972, and some more urban National Park units such as Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore that was established by Congress in the late '60s in the Gary, Indiana area. There was this very large debate going on about how far the National Park Service should go in direct land management in urban areas. Was this an opportunity for a lot of people around the country to get a first exposure to the National Parks and to bring that land ethic and that opportunity for recreation experience to a lot more people, or was it diluting the caliber of the units that were in the National Park System, spreading resources too thin and degrading the rest of the system?

At the time I went to work for the subcommittee, it was being chaired by Roy Taylor. Mr. Taylor was a moderate Democrat from North Carolina and he headed the subcommittee for about 10 years. He was very interested in, and committed to, the jurisdiction. [He] had a strong personal affinity for the national parks. Taylor was a consensus politician, so a great deal of the way the committee operated was in a very bipartisan manner. Generally, if there was a bill [where] differences couldn't be worked out, that bill probably didn't move. That was the sense of the way Taylor ran the subcommittee.

The world changed for that subcommittee after the 1976 election. After that election is when Phil Burton, by one vote, lost the race to Jim Wright to become majority leader in the House of Representatives. At the same time Roy Taylor retired following that election. So here was Phil, one of the highest ranking members on the House Interior Committee, suddenly with his career track derailed. He looked at that little National Parks Subcommittee and decided that was going to be his next crusade. It was almost like there was this very big engine that wasn't hooked up to a drive train all of a sudden, and Phil needed to be hooked up to something. So he took over the subcommittee, asked me

to stay on, and we had a very wild ride for about four years. It was a really interesting time.

I think of that background because I've been thinking about the Santa Monica issue. It was part of that whole national debate that was going on regarding what the Park Service should do in urban areas. We had done work in the subcommittee prior to that, particularly with the Cuyahoga [Valley] National Recreation Area up in Ohio. And when John [F.] Seiberling, who represented the Akron area, came on to the Interior Committee, he began to work for the establishment of a Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area and the subcommittee began to debate very actively how far was it willing to go, what was it willing to do, in dealing with these high profile, very expensive urban national parks.

The advent of the Burton era for that jurisdiction, and for those issues represented a very large change in a number of ways. For one, Phil was not a consensus politician, certainly not in the same way that Roy Taylor had been. He very much seized the issue and ran with it. He was also an extraordinary builder of political coalitions that could bring an issue through the legislative process. He lived and breathed that every day. So that was his approach to that subcommittee. I think that one of the reasons that Phil took the subcommittee was probably the Redwood National Park issue in California. That was something that was really important to his constituents in his San Francisco district; it's something that he had been talked to about. It was also something that had been high-centered in the Congress before that time, because it was extraordinarily expensive. There was a great deal of opposition from people in Northern California to expanding the national park. So one of the precipitating things for Burton in taking the subcommittee was the Redwoods issue.

Once he got started in the subcommittee, I can recall having some conversations with Phil where he talked about wanting to drag the entire environmental movement into the late 20th century, and Phil was not a person who was shy and retiring about this. His view was that people had been shooting too low, had been settling for a lot less than they should have over the years, and it was time to get some of these things done. If you talked to Phil at that time, besides Redwood, you would probably hear things about the Mineral King Valley next to Sequoia National Park. Those were the sorts of things that Phil had on his mind, issues that had been stalled for some time. And he was determined he was going to break through. So I guess the genius of Phil Burton around this theme had to do with tying together a great many, to some extent, parochial issues, issues that were important to people in their districts, and bringing those together into this grand Omnibus Bill that he expected would let him also have the push to get through some controversial items.

As we began to work on the Santa Monica issue, that was Phil's approach, not just for Santa Monica but for a very large number of other things that he wanted to pull together into this one big legislative package. Working through some of the specifics of that, we had been working already on the Cuyahoga Valley NRA, as I mentioned. In terms of thinking about the legislative language, looking at Cuyahoga, looking at Golden Gate, there was a pretty reasonable legislative model already set up, in terms of thinking about how a Santa Monica bill would get put together. Len, I don't know if it's useful to you, but as I looked through your chronology it occurred to me--I don't know if you're still looking for people to pick up threads on this.

PITT: Sure.

PINNIX: Have you spoken with a woman named Loretta Neumann?

PITT: I've heard the name but I haven't interviewed her, so please, go right ahead.

PINNIX: Well, just as an aside, Loretta was John Seiberling's key staff during that whole time, first with Cuyahoga National Recreation Area, but also working as John's personal staff on legislative issues. And Loretta was very much a part of the people that were working real hard to establish the urban NRAs as legitimate units of the National Park System. She might be a worthwhile interview just for that aspect.

PITT: Thank you for that.

PINNIX: Thinking about Santa Monica, and again here's where, 20 years later, my recollections aren't real clear. But I can remember Tony Beilenson having some meetings with Phil in his office, talking about the need to move on this. Phil had a--actually before he took over the National Parks jurisdiction--there was a subcommittee on Insular Affairs. That committee had jurisdiction about the trust territories in the Western Pacific, Guam, Virgin Islands, and Phil had a little subcommittee office on the fifth floor of the Longworth Building. And when he combined the jurisdictions and took over the National Parks and Recreation jurisdiction, he kept that little office as sort of his personal retreat. He would work on the subcommittee's business. I think we had some meetings up there with Tony Beilenson, and people like Henry Waxman who were also coming into town, while Phil was working on some of these issues that he was going to try to assemble.

The other thing--and here's something that I can't give you a lot of specifics about, Len, but perhaps entered into this--I know that at that same time Phil already had on his mind the 1980 redistricting that was coming up. And he was working hard at how he was going to work on redistricting California for the benefit of electing as many Democrats as possible. And some of those meetings in that little fifth floor office where Phil would usually hold forth with a tumbler of vodka and a pack of Chesterfields, part of the talk was about what could be done to assemble the Omnibus Bill, but at the same time, with those California colleagues, also thinking about what it was going to take to have some political advantage in redistricting after the 1980 census.

PITT: Fascinating!

PINNIX: And a lot of that stuff to me was, frankly, Greek. It was not something that was in my background. It was something that I only understood in the sense that here was the subcommittee chair who, besides working on the legislative issue, sure had something else in mind that he was working hard on.

I'm not really a great source for you for a lot of the specifics around the California politics of the Santa Monica bill. The chronology that you've done is real fascinating, because clearly you are following all of those threads. Mostly what I saw was from the subcommittee level--Phil's interest in assembling this package. He developed a very

close working relationship with Keith [G.] Sebelius, who was the ranking Republican on the [National Parks and Insular Affairs] subcommittee and it was interesting to watch that because Sebelius was a member of Congress who was very interested in the subject matter. He was a person who genuinely was trying to learn the subject matter, [and] represent the ideas well, and he and Roy Taylor had worked closely together.

I expect Sebelius was pretty much taken aback when this sort of wild man liberal from California took over the subcommittee. But Phil went out of his way to--he consulted Sebelius. The Republican side staffer for the subcommittee was Clay Peters. There's another name. I don't know if you've interviewed Clay?

PITT: No.

PINNIX: But Clay worked on this same issue and Phil was very accommodating [by] bringing Clay in, bringing in Rep. Sebelius, wanting to be sure that they were fully a part of what he was looking at in assembling the various bills. I think some of his way of approaching Sebelius was that there might be some times when he and Sebelius would vote against each other--on opposite sides--and that Phil was going to be good in lining up the votes so he'd win. But he also wanted to be sure that he had all of Sebelius' best input, even if Sebelius didn't support the proposal in the final form. And I think that was something that I saw Burton do with this issue and others. He tried to say to people that, from Phil's perspective, they might have their own other reasons--sometimes constituent-driven, sometimes policy-driven--for voting the other way on an issue. But Phil wanted to be sure that they were fully consulted and that he had at least paid attention to those things that he could fix in a piece of legislation that wouldn't undermine what he was trying to do

PITT: A wonderful insight.

PINNIX: It was a fascinating tactic, because here was this extremely liberal Democrat and he actually seemed to form some of his stronger and better alliances with conservative Republicans. [Robert J.] Bob Lagomarsino, in terms of the Santa Monica issue. Lagomarsino's district had people that were interested in this, that were supportive of protection for the Santa Monica Mountains and Phil worked closely with Lagomarsino, consulted him, wanted to be sure that whatever came out of this thing, that he, Lagomarsino, would feel politically protected at the end about that.

The other players I think about would be Burton also trying to have some contact with his counterparts in the Senate. You know, the institutional differences are kind of interesting, Len. I think that Phil--although I didn't see a lot of this--my sense is that Phil and Alan Cranston at least communicated reasonably well with each other. And there was consultation that went on between Phil and Cranston and his folks to be certain that the things that he was working on were going to be acceptable over on the Senate side, as well. Well, maybe enough said about that.

I'm sort of thinking how this thing went. We did field hearings. It's my recollection it must have been sometime in maybe [the] summer of 1977, where we did field hearings in Santa Monica on the bill.

PITT: Were you there?

PINNIX: Yes. I staffed the field hearings that we ran. So part of what went on at that time was an opportunity for the members who were out there to get a look at the Santa Monicas. Sue Nelson and other people hosted the subcommittee, got them out on the ground to some extent, and also to some extent I think were really demonstrating the kind of constituent support and interest that people had. You know, when I looked at your chronology, it shows in '77 that Beilenson, Burton, [Austin J.] Murphy [Penn.] and Sebelius are led on tour of the Santa Monicas. And my guess is that's the time when we were out there doing the field hearings.

PITT: Right.

PINNIX: Yes, and got the members around in some of the area. My recollection of the field hearings is that they were a little bit of a "love-in." They probably weren't terribly substantive. I think Sue and other people had really lined up a lot of supporting players to come and demonstrate the broad community support for the issue. I can't honestly tell you that there were things that we got out of field hearings that made a substantial difference in the legislation. I think it was more a matter of demonstrating the broad-based local support for the idea of a national recreation area.

At the same time, thinking about Burton's way of trying to at least get the best accommodation he could for people, even if they might disagree in the end, Phil kept talking to people in the Department of the Interior as well. In your chronology you mention some of the things, [such as] the BOR [Bureau of Outdoor Recreation] studies on urban recreation areas of the Santa Monicas. And Burton kept working with some of the key legislative people in the National Park Service.

Two people I think about there that might be of some value to you. One is a guy named Mike Lambe. Mike was an attorney for the National Park Service, who was the head of their legislative support unit. Mike's recently retired but he's still around in the Maryland area. You can probably easily catch up with Mike, I expect, through the Washington, D.C. office of the National Park Service. They should be able to help you find him. But he was involved in that. The other guy who was an interesting player in this was Dr. Richard Curry. Dick still lives in the Virginia suburbs, over in the McLean area. Dick was the political level NPS official. I think his title was probably Associate Director for Legislation, something like that. [He] dealt with the legislative program. And both Dick and Mike, while they were representing an administration that was very cautious about how far they were going in spending with these kind of urban NRAs, worked closely with us on the subcommittee and with Phil directly. Phil was very careful to try to listen to their points of view, look to Mike Lambe for assistance in drafting provisions because Mike was very good at it. He was a real solid attorney who had had years of experience on that.

Oh, Len, one thing as an aside that I noticed. Where is it, in some of your notes or chronology? Oh, it's in the cover letter you sent me. You had Dale Crane listed as an attorney. He wasn't an attorney for the Park Service. Dale was working for the subcommittee at that time on a [congressional] fellowship.

PITT: Yes, I misspoke. I did interview him and got a lot out of it. Well thank you for that.

PINNIX: Sure. Working through the legislation, and again here's one of those things I can't sit here today, so many years later, and give you anything where we made specific changes in the bill text at any time. My memory is just not that good. A lot of what we were doing at that point was pulling together a lot of these issues, getting the necessary background on [them], getting the text in enough shape so we could start assembling them into this monster package that, I'm sure as people have told you, became known as the "Park Barrel Bill." [laughter]

PITT: Right, right.

PINNIX: Which is a pretty great name. And the Santa Monica issue. My sense was that a fair number of people--even including some of those in the Department of the Interior--recognized that while there was still this big debate about whether the National Park Service should be doing those sorts of areas at all, that the Santa Monicas did represent a relatively intact resource that was important, and [that] by being close to an urban area was deserving of some protection. So my sense was that the people in Interior, while they were very reluctant about how far this might go, or where it might take them, I don't feel that we got heavy pressure or a real strong sense from the Interior Department leadership that they couldn't accept this sort of thing.

The other guy that Burton sort of made friends with was Cece [Cecil] Andrus, Carter's Secretary of the Interior. Phil used to erupt in diatribes about Jimmy Carter, that he was incredibly upset with Carter's way of dealing with Congress, with what Phil perceived as a lack of respect for the prerogatives of Congress and also just incompetence in the Carter administration and their whole approach. I've heard some pretty long rants from Phil about that, but he somehow fastened on Andrus as a soul mate. It seemed to be a bit reciprocal, which is sort of this unlikely pairing of people. But Andrus was very supportive of the work that Phil was trying to do, and my sense is he was willing for Phil to be pushing these very expensive bills. [At the] same time we were looking at the Santa Monicas we were working the Redwood National Park Expansion Act, which wound up--the final bill I think was something over half a billion dollars, Len. It was pretty scary. Andrus was sort of willing for the staff people in Interior to keep working with Phil on this and to be as supportive as he could, and then let the bloody battles go on at the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] level. So while he knew that Santa Monica and some of these other things were controversial issues, I think his sense was also that it had mostly to do with budget and that on their merits it was worthwhile to try to keep pressing forward.

There were some other things we dealt with that on their merits were more questionable, and Burton was open to hearing about some of those things. It's sort of interesting, looking back, that some of the things that seemed less persuasive on their merits in one way or another, dropped off on the cutting room floor at various times. They just didn't happen. I think he paid attention to that.
Maybe it's time for me to stop and let you ask some questions.

PITT: Okay, that's fine. The boundary concept for Santa Monica was somewhat murky, and as you said, so was the question of what kind of a park it should be.

PINNIX: Right.

PITT: The expression that was used by the Interior Department, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was a "green line park." That was one possibility.

PINNIX: Right.

PITT: "We'll draw a line and then the federal government will not by any means administer or take over, but will assist the local jurisdictions." And at the other extreme there was the recreation area [concept]. So, what kind of a park it should be was somewhat murky and the boundaries were somewhat murky. Do you have any insight? Let's take the boundary part--how that was finally hit upon, because a map was actually folded into the bill.

PINNIX: Yes. You know, Burton used to have an expression in his gruff way, Len. He would say, "It's not neat but it works." [laughter] That was sort of a touchstone for him in going through this stuff. As we were dealing with some of the issues at that time, I guess this was an era when there were some different kinds of concepts being tried. The Pine Barrens legislation that tried to identify a very large area and throw a planning line around it, a green line around it, but expect that a great deal of the lead effort would come from state and local planning and regulation. We were working on the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area on the outskirts of Atlanta. That approach was sort of a chain of small sites, kind of strung together--a very different approach. We had been working on Cuyahoga. I think from Phil's perspective, and in working through that for the subcommittee, there was [the question], What's going to sort of soothe people locally? So I think in many ways we looked right back to people like Sue Nelson and others and said, "Are the specific provisions something that you are willing to work with and tailor to fit what's acceptable in the local area?"

PITT: Well, tell me about your perceptions of Sue as she came to work on the bill and lobby [for the park]. She's remembered by Tony Beilenson, and practically everyone else, as being the crucial person, as far as Tony was concerned, in designing the park. What can you tell us about that?

PINNIX: I think two things. One, Sue was a great advocate. She was really passionate about the Santa Monicas. That came through. She really was willing to go in and deal with anybody about it. And, second, Sue really did know something about the area. She really was familiar with it, and I can recall Sue coming in on some of her trips back to D.C. where she would come into the subcommittee offices, she'd sit down with us and try to work through specifics. She would spend extended sessions with Phil going through some of the politics--who was affected by this, who maybe had a concern in some way that could or couldn't be dealt with. Yes, I really think it's fair to say that she was a person that people could go to and [ask] How is this going to affect us?

PITT: Now at one point, I heard it said that she learned a lot from Phil and Phil learned a lot from her, but that there were some cross words at various time. Was that anything that you recall?

PINNIX: You know I don't recall anything specifically. Phil's way of dealing with people was, in a lot of ways, incredibly confrontational. It took some getting used to for me and for a lot of other people. Sometimes you were going to experience Phil where he was basically going to be a raving maniac. [laughter] That could be real hard on folks. I think I still have some scars. I know a lot of other people do. But nothing particularly stands out. My guess is that that little fifth floor office, I expect it has some real strong memories for a number of people. There were times when Phil could get in there--he was an incredibly heavy drinker--and he would have a couple of glasses of Stolichnya and he would get on his high horse and you might as well sit there in Receive Mode because he was going to be in Output Mode. I just don't have any particular recollections between Phil and Sue, but it's kind of like Phil had hot words with everybody. And if you caught him wrong on something he would tear your hide off in small pieces.

PITT: So nothing special there. What about Joe Edmiston, do you remember him?

PINNIX: Yes, [but] again it's just failed memory and too many years. My recollection is that Joe was certainly one of the people that was important because Joe was an institutional player with the [Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning] Commission and I think he really brought some weight to saying, "Well, here are some ways that some things can be done to look at the larger landscape of this area." I remember Joe being one of those people [saying], "Okay, let's find some practical ways to make this work." I think his presence was real important. But that's probably about all I can say.

PITT: Beilenson, and Beilenson's staff, you mentioned, and I did too, some of them. Can you pick out some detail?

PINNIX: Gail Osherenko worked for Tony, and again, I think, was his lead person, the kind of person that we would work with frequently and [ask], "Are we getting this right, are we setting things up to do the necessary field work we have to do." [She did] that kind of work. I can remember Gail's role in that. I honestly can't remember some of the other names of Beilenson's staff people who helped us with hearings and the stuff out in the field.

PITT: Linda Friedman possibly?

PINNIX: Yes, the name rings a bell.

PITT: And Beilenson himself? Did you work directly with him ever, or was it through his aides?

PINNIX: It was mostly with Phil and Tony. Only in the sense that when we had some meetings that Tony was in working with Phil, some of it on the district politics. How was this affecting people in that area? What kind of things were going to be needed to think about with the legislation to be sure we get it right? So I didn't really have a lot of close contact with him.

PITT: Now, there was a lot at stake for the in-holders, private land developers, oil-drilling companies--big stake holders up there in the Santa Monicas. Did they come along lobbying? Did you ever have direct or indirect dealings with them?

PINNIX: You know, I don't think that we got a lot of real strong stuff on that. That may have been the result of some good grassroots work going on by Sue and others out at the local level. But unlike some other bills where we had a lot of very direct contact with folks in that situation, and a lot of real struggle, I don't recall that being what we dealt with at the subcommittee staff level at all.

PITT: I know that you read the [John] Jacobs biography of Phil Burton, *A Rage for Justice.*[11] Has he got it right mostly, or are there things that you would have said differently, or added?

PINNIX: Well, in terms of the things that I knew about, I think John really did get it right. Yes, I thought it was real impressive. I thought he did a good job of not only getting specifics right for some of the things that went on, but how Phil approached them. It's too bad a book like that wasn't available for people like me while we were working for Phil. [laughter] We would have understood some of the things a lot more. I think Jacobs did a good job on that.

PITT: Lagomarsino. Obviously the Republican and obviously very important that he be aboard. Do you remember working with him or his people?

PINNIX: Oh, yes, a fair amount, because Bob was on our subcommittee, and he was one of the more active Republican members on the subcommittee. He was interested in the subject matter, spent some time on it himself, [and] worked on that. Phil had been great buddies with Bill Ketchum, who was this extremely conservative Republican congressman from down there. And back before he took over the national parks issue, Burton worked with Ketchum to sort of program things together on some of the territorial matters. It was very interesting to realize that here's this guy who was a real conservative Republican but served in the Pacific in World War II, and he really had a direct connection and feeling for these other cultures in the Pacific and wanted to help them, so Burton really programmed with Ketchum. And I had a sense that he sort of took that same approach with Lagomarsino. It seemed to me that he and Bob had a pretty darn warm personal relationship. They could joke together about things.

PITT: That's interesting.

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[11] *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phil Burton* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

PINNIX: Yes, it was. It was really interesting watching Burton because the people he was usually the most really pissed-off about and considered his enemies were other liberal Democrats. In really bitter personal ways, Len, really ugly sort of ways. And some of the people that he really considered to be kind of his buddies were conservative [Republicans]. I guess with Lagomarsino he sort of felt like he and Bob connected personally. And they were engaged with each other about some of the work of the subcommittee.

PITT: What was it about the two of them that [they] could do that?

PINNIX: That's a really good question. You could see that the chemistry was there, and that they did well together, and it was one of those things at staff level--where Clay Peters, the Republican staffer--and I would always say "Isn't it interesting the way these guys work together?" We did the staff work for them and saw that happen.

PITT: Now, was Burton at loggerheads with Beilenson. Was he one of the liberal Democrats that he clashed with?

PINNIX: Not in a big way that I saw. The sort of stuff that I think about was Phil had I guess, long running feuds with some of the other leading Democrats. He and John Dingell used to go to war on stuff. Some of the stuff in Jacobs' book is about that.

PITT: And another congressman whose name flits in and out was Barry Goldwater, Jr. Do you have any insight to his role in this?

PINNIX: Boy, I don't really recall that we worked closely with Barry or with his office, at least from what I saw. I can remember that maybe [he was involved] at the field hearings, or some of the D.C. hearings we had, but I didn't have a sense that he or his staff were working real closely with this.

PITT: You did explain quite clearly how you came through in your own career from National Park Service and internship and consultant. Exactly what was your title and what were your responsibilities on that committee and working with Phil Burton, just the technicalities of it.

PINNIX: Well, I guess it was funny, Len, because my title at first was Professional Staff Consultant to the Subcommittee. I think when Phil took the subcommittee over, combined the jurisdictions, at one point he decided my title should be Staff Director for the Subcommittee, which was frankly sort of bullshit, because everybody really reported to Phil and we all knew it. [laughter] But that's kind of the way it was. When Phil took over as chairman, I was the only professional level staffer for that subcommittee. I had a secretary, and then we had staff help from the full [Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs]. [One was] a guy named Lee McElvain, who had previously been staff person for the subcommittee. Lee had been moved into the general counsel job. He was an attorney for the full committee. So basically I did the work with the secretarial support, was able

to draw on people like Lee for help with legal issues and working through the process. And when Phil came on, Phil wanted to keep all the insular affairs jurisdiction, so they worked [it] out among the senior members. They restructured the full committee so that we had a subcommittee that was National Parks and Insular Affairs and that was simply a melding together of those two subcommittees for convenience because Phil wanted the whole jurisdiction. So he had a staff for the territories work, too, and he simply kept that subcommittee staff.

Dale Crane--you mentioned you had a chance to talk to Dale, too. Dale came, just like I had come to Capitol Hill on a short-term legislative internship, Dale had come up on a long-term fellowship. Dale was an employee of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and he had come up on this long-term assignment, so he spent, I think, half the year with us and half the year with the Senate [Energy and Natural Resources] Committee and then he also got a job offer at the end and elected to stay on. So Dale first was listed on the subcommittee stuff as a congressional fellow, because he was up there on this internship, and probably the following year, Phil hired Dale on to work on the staff full time.

PITT: Right. I am looking at the little wheel here and I think we're about to come to the end of this reel, so we'll flip it over and if you like we'll take a little break.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: It now begins to record. Shall I ask you another question, Cleve?

PINNIX: Sure.

PITT: The Channel Islands fit in an important way but it is not altogether clear where [they] stood with respect to the Omnibus Bill that was actually passed and signed November, 1978. At least it's not clear to me whether the Channel Islands National Park had been taken out of that, or was a separate piece of legislation. Can you clarify that?

PINNIX: Oh boy, I can't sitting here, Len. It should be easy to research out. I know for example that some of what you faxed me were those pages out of the legislative history. That's something that Phil had us put together.[12]

PITT: So, it'll be in the legislative history.

[12]U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, 95th Cong., 2d sess., December 1978, "Legislative History of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978" (Washington, D.C., 1978). Re: Public Law 95-625.

PINNIX: It should be. The reason I think about that is that we did the "Park Barrel Bill"--a big package. But we also did a couple of other, smaller omnibus bills during the time that Phil had the subcommittee. And it may have been that the Channel Islands came in one of the other packages.

PITT: Because, I believe the actual date of passage in implementation on Channel Islands was just a shade longer, maybe into the next year.

PINNIX: Yes, I bet that's it. Yes. Because there were some things maybe that just weren't far enough along, that we put together. There were actually a couple more omnibus bills.

PITT: But I'm thinking that essentially it was of the same origin. It came out of Phil Burton's political work on the Omnibus Bill, whether it was actually passed a little later or not. Am I right about that?

PINNIX: You know, I'm not sure. Here's why it might take a little sleuthing for you. It's almost like in that era, in the late '70s, there was a logjam of some things that hadn't gotten through. Probably a classic example is, let's say, the Mineral King Valley addition to Sequoia. It had been blocked for a number of years. And then there were also some other things that I think were emerging issues that maybe didn't have a long history that were still being worked [on], by both the local politics and also the agency people. That was a time when the leadership of the National Park Service was not unwilling to see the system expanded. They were mostly concerned that the expansion be on areas that were meritorious, and there was a National Park System Plan that had been developed, I think, in the early '70s. Are you familiar with that?

PITT: Well, in the early '70s the plan that I'm aware of came from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, as I mentioned to you.

PINNIX: No, what I'm thinking about is something done by NPS and what was interesting is that, for natural areas, for what we would think of as classic national parks. It broke the country up into a series of physiographic provinces. Then it tried to identify, within each physiographic province, what were the most significant natural resources, and were there examples of those most significant resources in the National Park System or in some other equivalent protected system.

PITT: No, it doesn't ring a bell. It looks like I should try and track that down.

PINNIX: It's probably kind of a tactical thing for you, [of] how wide you want to cast your net, Len. But it was an interesting part of the whole [question] of how did the system expand during that era, because that plan actually was used by the people in the National Park Service in determining what they were willing to recommend. It was also given a fair amount of attention up on Capitol Hill, in terms of what were some areas that, on their merits, belonged there. What I recall is that some of the interest in the Channel Islands legislation came out of that. The Channel Islands were really seen as a

unique and very valuable natural resource that should have some representation and should be in some protected status.

PITT: That helps. You were mentioning early on that in 1972 or so there was this debate in Congress about national parks or national recreation areas or green line [parks]. Where did you come down as the National Park Service person on this [question] at the time?

PINNIX: You mean me personally?

PITT: Yes.

PINNIX: Frankly, when I was being Smokey the Bear out there in the field, I didn't think about it much at all. I was too busy doing what I did in the individual parks. When I started working for the subcommittee and started really dealing with policy-level things, personally I guess I was a bit of a liberal or renegade about this. My sense was that what the National Park Service could bring was a way of managing land, a way of caring for resources, and also a way of helping people appreciate and draw value from those resources that I thought was very important for people in urban areas.

And, for what it's worth, my personal context is that I had grown up seeing the lands of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which are a magnificent natural resource today, but actually were a lot of pretty damaged lands when they were purchased from private owners.

And I had also seen Shenandoah National Park which was the same thing, purchased in the Depression. You know Shenandoah started as cut-over, wrecked farm land that had been so badly abused that it wasn't even worth subsistence farming any more. And the establishment of Shenandoah--the assembling of that resource base and having it close to the major population area around the nation's capital--I thought was a really worthwhile part of federal policy. So my thinking had been influenced by seeing some of those things in my own experience that said, One of the things that can be done under National Park Service management is to take an area that's not pristine, that's not perhaps the tallest mountain, the biggest tree--that normal sort of iconic thing about national parks.

PITT: Like Yosemite.

PINNIX: Yes. Exactly. But to be able to take a landscape that still has some worthwhile natural values, and then by bringing protected management to that landscape and opportunities for public use and not only recreation but also, hopefully, inspiration, you could do something really valuable for people. So I, unlike some of my colleagues, tended to support the notion that the Santa Monicas, the Gateways, the Chattahoochies, and the Cuyahogas, were actually a valuable part of extending the concept of the national parks and making them accessible to a lot more people in the country. A lot of other really good people in the National Park Service would say that's absolute heresy and would cut my tongue out. [laughter] There was really a very interesting debate going on at that time with the secretary of the Interior and the Advisory Board on the National Parks. There were various prestigious people who were very concerned about [park

accessibility] and were looking very seriously at it. So, I think there was really a good honest debate on the merits that wasn't simply, "Oh my God, if we get more of these things we're going to spend too much money." There were certainly some other people who were motivated along those lines. I also think there was a genuine debate about what should go into the National Park System.

In Southern California, Santa Monica was a part of that debate, and had both its proponents and opponents. During that same era we also worked on the [proposal for an] Irvine/Orange Coast NRA which--and this is my own bias--from my perspective and a number of people who worked on that--didn't have the same natural resource merits as the Santa Monica Mountains did. That's one where Phil sort of danced around that one a lot, but it just never got done. It always felt to me like Burton tried to tell the difference, too.

PITT: When did you first come to Southern California and what were your impressions.

PINNIX: Oh gee, I think it must have been that first trip we did in about the summer of '77, when we ran the field hearings out there, and I was able to get out into the Santa Monica's a bit. Of course, you're seeing it at a time of year when things are pretty dry and blasted out, but one of the things I was impressed with was how a lot of the core of the mountains there were actually still pretty intact. There hadn't been a whole lot of subdivision and sprawl getting up into it.

I remember we looked at some of the stuff along the coast line there, and we spent some time, I think probably with a couple of NPS staff people, and probably Clay Peters was out there with me as well, the Republican staffer for the subcommittee. And I remember we were having some discussions about what were some of the critical resources that were still reasonably intact enough to try to hang on to, and trying to get a better sense for that. What was it, there were some areas over on the--I want to say it was sort of on the northeast side of the mountains--over on the backside of the range. Is that where they had some of the old movie sets?

PITT: Right. Paramount Ranch and so on.

PINNIX: Yes. And I remember we got to look at some of those areas and had some discussions about was there still a chance to get some of those into protected status because you could see the encroaching development of the San Fernando Valley. Is that what was over there?

PITT: That's on the north side. Right.

PINNIX: I'm thinking about that continued urbanization that just kept crawling up into the foothills.

PITT: I think that "MASH" was being made up there at the ranch. Did you go on the helicopter ride?

PINNIX: Yes, I think so. It's terrible to say I think so; we were sort of in scramble mode for many of those things. Yes, I think I got out there with the subcommittee members. We were looking at that. It was probably right on the same field trip when we did the hearings.

PITT: You've had several jobs, I would imagine, in the last 20 years. Can you mention just a few and tell us what you do now?

PINNIX: I left the congressional subcommittee after the '80 elections, when Phil gave up the subcommittee and went over to do Health and Human Services, mostly to play defense with the Reagan administration coming in and the Republicans taking over the Senate. I sort of looked around and said, You know, I don't think a whole lot is going to happen here for a while.

When I originally took the job, Len, I didn't think of myself as somebody who wanted to spend a whole career as a congressional staffer. I felt like if I had some value in that process it was that I brought in a perspective of somebody who had actually worked in the National Parks and I didn't want to become a creature of the Congress. So, in '81 I started saying maybe it's time to make the next move. You know, John Seiberling had taken over the subcommittee. He was a great guy, he was a wonderful person to work for, but I just felt like with the change in administration and the leadership in the Senate, we were mostly going to spend a lot of time maybe having hearings and stuff, but not getting too much through the end of the pipe. I got a job offer out here in the state of Washington from an old friend, Russ Cahill, who you interviewed.

PITT: Right. I did. He mentioned your name to me.

PINNIX: He had been State Parks Director down in California when all of this was going on. So basically we jumped at the chance. My wife and I had loved the Northwest when we were stationed here at Mt. Rainier, and it was a chance to come back to the Northwest while our kids were still at home and could enjoy it. So, I came out here and worked for the State Department of Natural Resources for about seven years. It was a fascinating agency, with really interesting issues, and then had a chance to come over to the State Parks System about ten years ago as Deputy Director. I'm basically an old "parky," and it was good to get back into it.

PITT: And is that officially what your title is?

PINNIX: No, I'm director.

PITT: Of Washington State Parks. Plural?

PINNIX: It's actually the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. We have a commission form of government. But basically we are the agency that runs the State Parks System.

PITT: Now, I'll take you back a little bit more for a few other things that occurred to me.

PINNIX: Sure.

PITT: Did you have any inkling of what was happening on the Senate side? In fact, I think you did say something in passing. Is it true that the bill actually might have been in danger on the Senate side, or is that not true?

PINNIX: Well, we worked pretty closely with the Senate staff. A guy named Tony Bevinetto was the Republican staffer over there and a fellow named Tom Williams was the Democratic staffer. Tony died a number of years ago. Cancer got him. If you want to pursue some of that, Tom Williams is probably a good contact. I don't know that I have any great insights on whether the bill was in particular jeopardy. When Phil first took [over] the subcommittee and found out that Jim Abourezk was going to be the subcommittee chair on the Senate side, Phil was sort of dancing around in the subcommittee office because he and Abourezk were somehow buddies. Again, one of those personal connections. So he felt like he and Abourezk could sort of program together and get stuff done. And he and Abourezk talked back and forth frequently. Do you have in your notes the staffer for Alan Cranston on this? What's her name?

PITT: I have seen it. In fact, it's in that packet that I sent you [that has] a little portion of the *Congressional Record*. It's debated on the Senate side and Cranston mentions some of the people.

PINNIX: Yes.

PITT: Now, an impression that Joe Edmiston had is this. Now, it's an impression, but it's interesting and I wonder if you have a reaction. [It's] that there were various forms of these bills or legislation about Santa Monica--as you and I have talked about it--and [that] what Phil Burton did in the end was sort of "mush" them together, and if you read the legislation as you just did for a refresher from what I sent you. Is that your impression?

PINNIX: Well I'm not sure I would call it "mush" it together because I think probably in getting it into final form, my guess is that Mike Lambe, the guy from the National Park Service, probably played a role in working with us, trying to say, Okay, how can we reconstruct this thing in a way that seems to be reasonably satisfactory to people?

PITT: I think "mush" is my word and not Joe's. What he was saying was that Burton's way of compromising was actually to embrace two distinct concepts here and put them in the same bill, making it a little complicated, but making it happen.

PINNIX: Right.

PITT: Was that his style?

PINNIX: I guess the way I characterize his style is it goes back to that Burton quote, "It ain't neat, but it works." And that was really it.

PITT: [laughter] Okay.

PINNIX: Frankly, a lot of it was ad hoc, Len. "Let's see what we can make fit together for this one." So I think Joe's got it right in the sense of saying, Put the things together that seem to go together on this case and let's run with it. Maybe one thing that we haven't mentioned. Burton cut his teeth on this kind of stuff before he was subcommittee chair with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Act.

PITT: You mentioned that. That's interesting.

PINNIX: Again, check my memory, but I think it went through in '72 and then had various revisions that Phil was involved in, too. And that was an example of one where he really worked the language in real specific ways. When he wanted to, he could pay incredible attention to detail. So, I think he sort of immersed himself--and this was before working for him--but my sense was watching him get into detail and amendments to that act, that he got very much involved in every single word of it, and worked some specific things in there. I think when he was working with not just the Santa Monicas, but a lot of things in the Omnibus Bill, maybe what he had to do was pull up and say, "Okay, let the staff people and the favorable constituencies work out whatever can go in here. What I'm going to do is work on assembling the political coalition that will get the whole thing passed through."

PITT: That makes sense.

PINNIX: If I went back today and tried to read the whole text of the Santa Monica section, I probably couldn't tell you exactly where which pieces came from. But my sense was, just from the way we working that whole monstrous omnibus package, that we were relying on proponents. Sue Nelson, and probably Joe Edmiston, too, had specific suggestions that we tried to incorporate. We were drawing on these National Park Service people who were trying to help us with drafting service and putting stuff together in that way.

PITT: [pause] Pardon my pausing here. I want to make sure I've not buried a question or two that I want to ask you.

PINNIX: When I went through the papers you sent me, Len, I looked at the [Omnibus] Bill text a little bit that you sent along. The thing that made me say, "Oh yes!" is the last section of that part of [Public Law] 95-625. It's on Santa Monicas and its authorizing the money, the appropriations.

PITT: Yes.

PINNIX: When I add those things up, I said, "It was $125 million for the direct land acquisition authorizations, and another $30 million for the grant stuff to go through to the state. Here was this $155 million package, and part of what was going on is that for that era those were very big numbers. I dare say that probably at the time Santa Monica was being worked on, that probably put it in maybe the top five most expensive National Park units, in terms of the commitments for land acquisitions. Maybe in the top two or three.

PITT: How do you think that came to pass? What does that tell us about this whole process?

PINNIX: Some of what that debate was about--and what a lot of the resistance was about--was whether the federal government should, through what at the time were very large commitments for appropriations, purchase green space near urban areas. Or should there be an expectation that more of this landscape preservation [should] be through zoning and through regulatory matters, basically, [through] growth controls. And you've got to think about when this was. You know, in the '70s it predates a lot of what later happened in a number of jurisdictions with much stronger growth control acts. So the effort in saving the Santa Monicas had a lot to do with, How are you going to buy the developable, seriously high-value land? And could you get there from here? And at a local level the answer might well have been, No, we've got to have federal assistance to pull this off.

PITT: So it was going in the direction of buying the land if the regulatory part didn't work or couldn't work, to produce a whole useful park.

PINNIX: I think some of the legitimate debate by the people in the Department of the Interior was because these near-urban areas were so incredibly expensive. As far as doing the land assembly, was that going to soak up all of the available resources that might also be important to the system for acquiring other lands of national interest and national significance? And I think there was an honest debate going on. It wasn't just a green eye-shade debate, if you know what I mean. It wasn't just the budget people that felt like committing to these expensive urban areas was maybe going to short-sheet the rest of the system. There were some real legitimate [concerns] whether this really was an appropriate thing to take on, on behalf of the national parks.

PITT: I'm glad you remembered to talk about the dollar amount. Not an insignificant issue.

PINNIX: Here's the funny thing about it, though. Why was Santa Monica Mountains stuck in the Park Barrel Bill, along with a lot of other things? Why were they stuck in that big package? I remember when we took the bill to the floor of the House and, if you go back and look at the *Congressional Record*, I think we spent about two full days of the House of Representatives' time in the floor debate on that bill. I'd never seen anything like that.

PITT: You mean the speed with which it was moving?

PINNIX: More than that. It was a major piece of legislation, and it required a great deal of debate time. The package was so huge. Normally, for a bill on individual National Park items, you might have an hour of floor debate scheduled. Maybe for a Redwood National Park expansion you might have a couple hours of debate scheduled. But this thing was such a monster package that it basically occupied two full days of the House debate time, which was unheard of. Nothing like that had been done before on this subject matter. If you went through and added up the money for Santa Monica and you added up the money for all those other things, here is this package that exceeded $1 billion in authorized spending. Phil was really proud of that, right? He wanted to crack those big numbers. But if you look at the debate on the House floor, there's not much debate about Santa Monica, is there?

PITT: No.

PINNIX: In fact, what you see there are what Phil would call "Mother's Day speeches." Everybody is grateful to everybody else. Everybody is complimentary to everybody else about how well they treated each other in doing this marvelous thing. You know what the big bitter debate was for two days on the floor of the House, Len?

PITT: What was that?

PINNIX: The thing in the bill that drew the big debate was whether or not Congress should rename the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as the, I think it was the Paul Douglas National Lakeshore, in honor of the late senator from Indiana. And people fell on their swords, fought and died, decided to vote "yea" or "nay" on the basis of that, yelled and screamed and got red in the face at each other. And I don't know to this day if Phil had that all orchestrated. But what I know is that they expended all that energy about how they were going to name a unit of the National Park System. And meanwhile, the Santa Monicas and all those other things, these big, major contentious issues, just sort of slipped right through without a ripple. [laughter]

PITT: He seems like an incredible politician. Can I ask you to pause for just a moment. I'm going to turn off the machine and be back in less than a minute.

PINNIX: Sure, no rush.

[recorder is turned off briefly]

PITT: I have just a few more questions by way of conclusion. I heard you say that you were a literature student or English major.

PINNIX: [laughing] That's right.

PITT: And I'm wondering--I have asked this of several of the people I interviewed. Is there a book that particularly influenced you in your job, in your profession, in your outlook on environmental matters?

PINNIX: That is a very interesting question, Professor Pitt. Good for you. You know, Len, one of the things that still sticks with me is the *Sand County Almanac*, of all things.

PITT: Leopold.

PINNIX: Absolutely, Aldo Leopold really had some good things to say about how we treat the land. Yes, that probably stuck with me in a lot of ways.

PITT: You read that probably when you were in college.

PINNIX: Probably did, yes. In fact, not long after I went to work for the House, a guy who was working for an infant organization of Huey Johnson's. You remember, we mentioned Huey Johnson last week. A guy named Phil Wallin who I think was working for Huey in getting the early TPL [Trust for Public Land] started, brought me a copy of *Sand County Almanac* to the office. He wanted to be sure that I knew about that. In fact, I read the book again, thanks to Phil. That's the one for me, I guess. What Leopold has to say about how you treat land over time, what the land gives back, if you treat it right. It has a lot to do with the way the National Park Service tries to behave, when they're doing it right. Good question.

PITT: Thank you for that answer. As you look back, over that chapter in your life, let's say '75 to '80 or so, are you satisfied with it? Was it a good time for you?

PINNIX: Yes, it was. The whole time working for the Congress was a good time. I worked for the Congress, for over seven years. There were some things that I did while Roy Taylor had the subcommittee that were very satisfying, too. We took on some pretty serious battles.

PITT: Other legislation.

PINNIX: Yes, yes. We stopped a pumped storage hydro-electric dam project on the headwaters of the New River in the Southern mountains. We never should have won that fight. It took two sessions of Congress to do it, and a lot of work, but it was worth doing, and it worked. And the ride with Phil, it was the wildest ride of my life, Len. You can hardly overstate what kind of unique engine he was, but I think we got some very worthwhile things done. It was a very exciting time to be up there. There was a real sense that you were able to participate in some things, and try to do your little piece on some issues that were important.

PITT: Learned some life-long lessons, and how use to use certain tools?

PINNIX: Yes. I'm not a politician, I'm a bureaucrat. But I certainly got an exposure in a way that I'd never have seen in other ways of how the political game really works from the inside. It was fascinating. It was a wonderful look at a different world, and I really was glad I did it. It was hard on my family and I worked real long hours. It was tough for my kids and I wasn't around them as much as I needed to be at that time. We struggled some with that, but I'm really glad we got to do it, I'm glad I got to do it.

PITT: Well, thank you for those personal comments. Thank you for the interview.

PINNIX: It's a pleasure to do it. You opened up some synapses for me that haven't been used for a while. It was fun to do. Thanks. I'll look forward to seeing the transcript. I'll try to give you a reasonable edit. I won't worry about it too much, except if I'm completely unclear about something, I'll try to clean that up.

PITT: I appreciate it. We will not get it into shape where we are both talking iambic pentameter.

PINNIX: No. I promise not to use any Middle English. [laughter]

PITT: And if there is anything else that--well, maybe I should ask right now, is there something that I neglected to ask you, and that you want to add?

PINNIX: I don't think so. You know, it's interesting with something like this. I thought you were really good about giving me an outline and doing some follow-ups, and thinking about things like how did Burton's experience with GGNRA [Golden Gate National Recreation Area] affect getting into that whole jurisdiction and taking that on. No, I think you really covered it.

PITT: If you do have something that occurs to you, you can write it, type it up, or call me, and we can put it on to this very same tape, and it will become part of the transcript. That will be just perfectly fine.

PINNIX: I was trying to think, too Len, is there anybody else I can think of who you might want to talk with. Or maybe you're at the end of [adding people].

PITT: You've given me some very good names.

PINNIX: The name I would really suggest to you is Dick Curry.

PITT: The retired NPS official. Where would I find him?

PINNIX: I may have the phone number at the house for Dick. Pretty sure he's in McLean, in the Virginia suburbs. I'll maybe try to give you a phone call tomorrow.

PITT: Well, that will be fine.

PINNIX: Interesting deal. Dick was a Republican political operative. He worked for Rogers C.B. Morton, and went down to the National Park Service during the Nixon or Ford administration and became so valuable in terms of dealing with legislative stuff for the national parks that when the Democrats took over in '77 they kept him. Then when the Republicans took over in 1981 they fired him, because Curry by then had become so much a part of really making National Park stuff work that the "R"s threw him out. But Dick might be a valuable source for you in thinking about the political players with Santa Monica and with some of those related topics.

PITT: Excellent. I'm glad. You gave me Mike Lambe and a few other people. I'm going to make a separate list. What I'm going to do now is thank you again for this interview. I'm going to turn off this machine and maybe we can get some phone numbers, or what have you. Let me just do that.

PINNIX: Yes. Let's do that.

[recorder is turned off briefly]

PINNIX: We should probably have a T-shirt printed up. I never thought of that. [laughter]

PITT: The tape is running again. We've had a brief chat, and we've had a little addition to the record on how Phil Burton used to address Cleve. Cleve, tell it in your own words.

PINNIX: I guess this is true confessions, but if you worked for a political animal like Phil Burton and you weren't one--Phil was known to introduce me from time to time to people as either "My political eunuch," or "My political neuter." And I never took it as an insult because I always thought it was right. Besides, he seemed to enjoy it so much. [laughter]

PITT: Well, thank you for volunteering that. It was prompted by my saying, off mike, that I thought of you as a public servant, not anything else, and a very valuable one. And that's how I do think of you. So thanks again.

PINNIX: Thanks Len, it's been a pleasure.

PITT: My pleasure too. Bye-bye.

PINNIX: Bye-bye.

End of Side B

End of Interview

— XIV —

FORMULATIONS OF A PARK PLANNER

An Interview with John Reynolds

Mr. Reynolds, a member of the very first NPS planning team for the Santa Monicas, was interviewed at his place of work in San Francisco on August 3, 1999. At the time of the interview he was Director of the Pacific West Regional Office of the National Park Service.

Interviewee: John Reynolds
Series: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Interviewer: Leonard Pitt
Transcriber: Dale Pitt

Beginning of Tape, Side A

PITT: [testing the recorder] So, why don't you tell me about the weather today in San Francisco and we'll see how you are coming across.

REYNOLDS: Well, the weather in San Francisco is absolutely marvelous. It's cool but you can walk around in your shirt and everything is fine.

PITT: It's that way here, too. That's why we're here in California, not somewhere else I think.

REYNOLDS: Right.

PITT: I'm now recording. I am in Los Angeles and Mr. Reynolds is in San Francisco at his place of work in the National Park Service. We have agreed to call each other by first names. So, John, let me start this way. You have a unique history with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in that you were here at the beginning, and then after a hiatus you came back into the loop, and you're very much in the loop today. I want to look at how it seemed to you at both ends of the loop, if I make my point.

REYNOLDS: Right.

PITT: First, let me ask you a personal question. Could you tell us something about your background--where you were born, educated, trained, and how you came into the Park Service?

REYNOLDS: Well, I was born into the National Park Service. My dad was a ranger in Yellowstone when I was born. I was born just outside the park in Livingston, Montana, lived eight years in Yellowstone, lived a few years in [then] Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in North Dakota, lived in Pipestone National Monument in Minnesota, moved to Omaha when my dad went to the regional office there, but that was when I was a freshman in high school. I went away to prep school in the East--the Phillips Exeter Academy--graduated there in 1960 and went to Iowa State University where I was

fortunate enough to receive a Bachelor of Science in landscape architecture in 1964. In 1966 [I] received a Master of Landscape Architecture from the state university college of forestry at Syracuse University, and joined the [National] Park Service on a permanent basis in the summer of 1966, although I had worked seasonally for, I think, four years before that, five years before that, five summers [that is]. Should I go forward?

PITT: For the moment that tells us a lot about you. It's in the blood, in other words. That does help a little bit. Did you have an appointment prior to coming to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area?

REYNOLDS: With the National Park Service?

PITT: With the National Park Service.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. I had been a permanent employee of the National Park Service from--actually I was permanently on the rolls, I believe, in 1963 although I didn't work full time until 1966. [I] have been ever since then a permanent employee, a career employee, of the National Park Service.

PITT: And located in the regional office, or all over the place?

REYNOLDS: Many places.

PITT: So you came with experience and were trained as a landscape architect.

REYNOLDS: That's correct.

PITT: You were hired by Robert Chandler to be part of a planning team at the Santa Monica Mountains. Can you tell us about the appointment--where you were, where you were appointed before, and maybe why he picked you?

REYNOLDS: Sure. Prior to coming to Santa Monica Mountains I was at the Denver Service Center in Denver, Colorado. The Service Center at that time particularly being the planning, design, and construction arm of the National Park Service. Immediately before coming I was actually a branch chief in charge of all planning activities for the Rocky Mountain and Midwest Regions of the National Park Service. But prior to that, and more importantly, I had been the team captain for the Yosemite Planning Team on the controversial planning efforts of the mid '70s in Yosemite.

When Bob Chandler became superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains he needed to put together a park management team that not only had to begin operating the programs of the National Park [Service], but also prepare the long-range plans for the Park. He had one assistant superintendent who was in charge of operations, and asked me to come to be in charge of running the planning effort, [to be] involved in the planning of the land acquisition program, and to manage the creation of a natural and cultural resource management capability for the park. So there were two assistant superintendents and I was one of them.

PITT: Tell me who else was on the team at the time. I believe he [Chandler] mentioned Dave Taylor and Sondra Humphries and Nancy [Fries] Ehorn.

REYNOLDS: Yes. Dave Taylor was the chief of land acquisition, Sondra worked for him, Eileen Salenik was actually the first person to arrive, I think, after Bob. Before Dave Taylor, she was in charge of land acquisition. She was the first lands person to arrive in the park. Alice Allen had been in charge of the Park Service's information office in downtown Los Angeles and so she transferred onto the park's staff. Bill Anderson was the first chief of--I'm not sure what the title was there--but of visitors' services, primarily creating education programs and other ways for people to visit and enjoy the park and learn about it. Ruth Kilday was the management assistant and liaison with the Advisory Commission. I guess she actually started as Bob's secretary, come to think of it. I'm not sure of that. She was [William] Bill Whalen's secretary when Bill Whalen was the superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Anyway, Ruth was one of the original . . .

PITT: Team members?

REYNOLDS: Yes. She's out there.

PITT: I have talked to her on the phone.

REYNOLDS: And sometime close in there Marti Leicester. And Marti is now here in this regional office. And Dave Ochsner was the chief of resource management working for me. Mary Gibson Park at the time, now Mary Gibson Scott, I hired early on as an outdoor recreation planner. She is in the process, actually, of becoming the assistant superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area now. And Nancy Ehorn was the team captain for the long-range plan, the General Management Plan, originally based in Denver, and [she] then moved out, I'd say, a year or so after we started.

PITT: You got here in 1979? Is that correct?

REYNOLDS: I got there in August of 1979. That's correct.

PITT: And so quite a large and expert team was in place within a matter of months?

REYNOLDS: That's absolutely correct. I was actually one of the last--I might even have been the last one of the management team to arrive. I'm not certain of that.

PITT: It sounds as if you had a lot to do.

REYNOLDS: I did.

PITT: You had good human resources with which to do it. What about the rest? Did you have whatever else you needed? Money and so on?

REYNOLDS: At least from my point of view, from my part of the operation, we had plenty of planning money. I don't remember any difficulties with money. Of course, we never had enough land acquisition money to do everything we wanted to do as quickly as we wished, but we did have substantial land acquisition money, at least at the very beginning.

You know, one of the unique aspects of Santa Monica Mountains was that when Congress passed the bill they were not really sure that they knew where the boundary ought to be. And so they included a provision in the legislation that actually allowed us to do a land protection plan which, when approved administratively, would proscribe where the final boundary would be. So Congress actually let us set, within obviously some parameters, the final boundary ourselves. It was one of the major efforts that I was involved in, of course.

PITT: In talking to [Anthony] Tony Beilenson and [Susan] Sue Nelson, and others, I learned that a map was actually included in the Omnibus Parks Bill that pertains to the Santa Monica Mountains. In fact, I have a little history on that boundary map, actually. I wonder if you have any recollection of that, and of starting to create your map with the document that was in the law?

REYNOLDS: Oh, sure. We started with that. We started from the basis of the one that was in the law. Probably the funniest story about that is that I went down to meet with the folks in the Navy at Point Mugu Naval Air Station because the original boundary on that map that you refer to actually crossed the end of their runway and so I went down as part of our planning effort to try and establish a final boundary to work with them. And [I] walked in and made a little presentation and showed them the place where it affected them and they were shocked. They had not ever known [that]. They checked back in Washington and could find nobody in the Navy that had ever known before the bill passed that, in fact, the boundary not only came into the Naval Air Station, but crossed the end of their runway. I wish I could remember the name of the captain to whom I was speaking, but his reaction was, "My God! It's our second Pearl Harbor." [laughter]

PITT: That was a good rejoinder.

REYNOLDS: We became good friends, though.

PITT: The philosophy of that--let's call it the Beilenson-Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains Map--was to get as much as they could and keep the boundaries off the ridges so the builders couldn't build after the public land was secured. Also, from what I can tell, it was not an arbitrarily drawn boundary. They went to tax assessors' maps and they asked people who lived in, let's say Topanga, to identify all the parcels that were open land so that it was based on a substantial amount of information, but obviously in a few places, like the one you just described, and perhaps others, it was a little bit arbitrary. Compared to that original map, did things change a great deal when you finally produced the map with the boundaries?

REYNOLDS: You know, my perception is that it didn't change a lot. I think my perception instead is that--you know it would be nice to have some of those documents we worked on--my perception is that we made some additions and some deletions that, based on further study, made a little more sense. I mean, one of the big controversies was around Lake Sherwood. We put less in than many people wanted. There was another controversy--I have to laugh because I'm sure Sue [Nelson] would not agree with this at this time but Sue didn't think that we should retain Cheeseboro Canyon, the stuff north of the freeway. I became very recalcitrant from her point of view, I think. She wouldn't remember it this way. It was just far too important to let go.

PITT: What she recalls is that, with respect to Conejo Peak, and Lady Face Mountain, that the boundary had shifted. I think she would put it this way: The map went with the law and it went into the National Park Service headquarters in Washington. When it emerged about a month later some parts were missing, like Conejo Peak, Lady Face Mountain, and some had been added, like Franklin Canyon, Cheeseboro/Palo Comado.

REYNOLDS: That's interesting. I didn't know that.

PITT: And then--I hope I have the sequence right--when your team got started locally, you actually went back to the larger boundary. I believe that's what she said.

REYNOLDS: You know that's interesting. I don't recollect. I think maybe we did not include as much of Lady Face as she would have liked, and actually I agree with her on that. And I know over on Conejo Mountain, I had--it would be interesting if Bob Chandler remembers these discussions--we had some fairly heated discussions because I wanted to add Conejo Peak and that whole face as you go down the Camarillo Grade into the park, [but] probably correctly, Bob believed that that would be a kiss of death to us if we did that at that point in time. But it's actually nice to see that the current planning team is, at least tentatively, talking about that again.

PITT: So maybe my recollection here is not too far off.

REYNOLDS: I would say that's probably true. And the other thing that I don't know all the details on, and it would be interesting to sit around with Joe [Edmiston] and Sue [Nelson] and others and see if we could figure out what was really the case, but I think that there was some effects of the workings of--what was it called? The Santa Monica Mountains [Comprehensive] Planning Commission? Is that what it was called?

PITT: Yes. Which evolved into the [Santa Monica Mountains] Conservancy.

REYNOLDS: Right. Exactly. I think they may have had some effects on the boundaries that came out of Congress, too.

PITT: In a negative way? To make it smaller?

REYNOLDS: My guess is that it probably would have been both, although I don't know that for a fact. I know they were finishing up their plan about the time that we came there. My remembrance is, and I could be wrong about this, is that there was some jiggering of the boundary as a result of that effort.

PITT: Now the idea was to assemble parcels that tied parkland together, and to preserve the visual beauty, and preserve the wildlife access, and the watershed. Have I got that right? Were there other criteria or desideratum that entered into it?

REYNOLDS: Let's see, you mentioned the scenic integrity of Mulholland to the greatest degree, preserving the wildlife, recreation activities you mentioned.

PITT: I didn't, but say a word about that.

REYNOLDS: Well, we wanted to include some areas where we could provide for some recreation activities that would help provide a visitation base, more than just the wild land recreation, actually. And then, of course, there were a couple of particular spots--gosh, what's the name of the one up on--oh, the Sampo [Farms]. Do you remember the Sampo [Farms]?

PITT: I remember hearing about it.

REYNOLDS: [It's] up along Las Virgenes Road just before it gets to 101 as you're heading north. We had great hopes of turning that into a major entrance into the park with activities.

PITT: Is that near the Claretville property, the Soka property?

REYNOLDS: The Soka property is kind of halfway down to Malibu. This is right up next to the freeway. We lost the land acquisition battle there and it's all now houses and stuff. So that was one that even though it's in the boundary that was lost.

PITT: Today we would talk about wanting to slow [the] growth. Was that part of your lexicon?

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I suppose [we said] "to manage." I don't suppose we ever said "slow growth." We probably said "managed growth." I mean, more ideal places [for development] and to protect less ideal places.

PITT: Did your team have a kind of consensus on most of these, or did I hear you say that you had some arguments?

REYNOLDS: Well, gosh, we had lots of very spirited discussions in three realms: one with individuals [in the public sector], one with the Advisory Commission, and one amongst ourselves. All very healthy. I don't mean to imply that these were knock-down-drag-out fights. They were very healthy, spirited discussions by people who cared a lot

about what was happening. They were some of the best I've ever had in my life and some of the most direct.

[David] Dave Brown brought innumerable maps of every place that we should show the boundary change or a degree of acquisition whether it would be fee [simple] or scenic easement, or whatever. Those maps actually became one of the most valuable tools that we had to use to make decisions. And when we did the final Land Protection Plan, after we had public comment on the draft, we actually used Dave Brown's maps that he submitted as his public comment. [They were] the primary basis from which to organize our decision making. The idea [was] that those maps probably covered 95 percent of the areas under controversy and if we covered those we would then have done a better than average job of covering all the comments, and then go back to the rest of the comments and pick up the rest. So Dave Brown's contributions to the thoughtfulness and accuracy of our decision making is--it's impossible to say how much good he did.

PITT: He was then with the Sierra Club Task Force?

REYNOLDS: I suppose. Yes. Although that's interesting. The Sierra Club never felt like it was a powerhouse. Dave Brown felt like he was more of a powerhouse than the Sierra Club to me. Just because he was so knowledgeable.

PITT: Why wasn't the Sierra Club more high profile here? Did they object to the concept of this urban park?

REYNOLDS: No. I just think it wasn't a major focus of where they wanted to put their energies. And they had individuals like Dave and two or three others that carried the day for them. We valued Dave and other folks who knew what they were talking about in terms of specific parcels of land and the whole mountain range, and so it became less important whether you were an organized group than whether you had really good information.

PITT: I'm hearing how you interacted with some of the grassroots people. We've mentioned Susan Nelson and Dave Brown. Who were some of the other . . .

REYNOLDS: Oh, Margot Feuer, Jill Swift, bless her heart, oh, my goodness, Linda who was a horseman. Linda Palmer? Is that right?

PITT: There was a Linda Friedman who was in Beilenson's office.

REYNOLDS: [We] interacted immensely with Linda Friedman. Linda Palmer is the horse woman, and I worked a lot with her. I worked even more with Linda Friedman.. Gee, I hate doing this because I'm going to forget. Because [there were] a lot of really fine people. There was a family whose name I will never remember in Lake Sherwood who just gave me hours of information and discussion.

PITT: Well, if you remember it later you can always add it. That's one of the things about this interview process, you can always add something later on.

REYNOLDS: And then there was a wonderful fellow and his wife down at the east end. He died while I was there.

PITT: I'm sure you're not going to remember all of them. You've already remembered quite a few. And so you were always ready to listen to the people in the trenches there who had information and ideas.

REYNOLDS: One of the reasons that Bob hired me is because at that point we had finished the Yosemite Plan and the Yosemite Plan was sort of known as the epitome of respectful public involvement. And then bringing Nancy Ehorn on who had very, very similar views. Nancy's ability to talk with people. And Eileen Salenik, in lands, turned out to be just exactly the same kind of a person. And then when I hired Mary Gibson Park. She came from the county and she had a similar reputation with the county. And then Bob's personality and approach is one to engage directly with people, not hide behind bureaucracy and all that. We consciously tried very, very hard to be very connected with people. Ruth Kilday had come [from] Golden Gate where they did another--where the plan there had been developed with very heavy public involvement and direct discussion with lots of people, and so she was geared the same way. It was a conscious decision on the part of the Park Service to find people who operated that way.

PITT: And this started, perhaps, with Bob Chandler himself?

REYNOLDS: Oh, absolutely.

PITT: He says of you, by the way, "John Reynolds was absolutely great as a planner and a can-do person and very optimistic."

REYNOLDS: Yes, well we sat on him pretty well.

PITT: Is that you?

REYNOLDS: [laughing] I'm always embarrassed when Bob Chandler says [that]. It's always so hard for me to believe that. But Bob and I had the most wonderful kind of a relationship you could ever imagine. It was, from my point of view, it was as equals. I never felt as though I was working for him, I felt I was working with him. Our interactions were just absolutely wonderful. I think we brought the best out of each other, which wasn't very hard to do.

PITT: So it sounded like good morale.

REYNOLDS: Excellent morale.

PITT: Really good team and got along quite well.

REYNOLDS: That's absolutely the case. And very important, by the way, when the administration changed and James Watt showed up on the scene in the Department of Interior. It was critically important if a team could continue--that [we] would not become so discouraged about what was happening in Washington that we forgot where we were headed.

PITT: Let's go there. What was your take, personally, on the Sagebrush Rebellion and James Watt? Bob, I can say, mentioned a Chuck Cushman yes and Citizens for Public Property Rights. [laughter] I hear you laughing. Tell us a little bit about it from your point of view.

REYNOLDS: Of course the Sagebrush Rebellion, with the re-election of Ronald Reagan, [was stronger than] at any point in time. Up to then at least. James Watt was chosen as Secretary of Interior because of his very direct and confrontational style to lead the Sagebrush Rebellion in the Department of Interior. Of course, the Rebellion was aimed at the Bureau of Land Management perhaps more strongly than [at] anybody else, but also all other federal land management agencies. The Department of Interior would [bear] the brunt of where it would hit. One of the basic precepts was that you shouldn't be acquiring any more land into the federal estate, and so they tried to shut down the Land Protection Program, the Land Acquisition Program, in the Santa Monicas. Of course, the Congress didn't agree with that, and it became a classic battle. The administration put out rules at one point [that] we couldn't acquire any land that was not adjacent to pieces that we had already acquired. Our approach had been to start to acquire lands in several high-priority areas.

I don't remember exactly [the] time and place, but I remember Bob and I having some pretty in-depth discussions about how we just had to have a little flexibility which we gained by going back to the Interior Department and saying, "You know, there are people who have legitimate hardships, medical hardships, who thought they were going to be able to sell their land." We got permission to respond to hardships, which we then used a few times to establish a spot of land in the place [where] we didn't own any of them, and then build off from that one.

PITT: You were working the loopholes here.

REYNOLDS: We tried hard, and I think it worked pretty well. Mr. Cushman I had met while I was working on the Yosemite Plan. His original interaction with the Park Service was as a landowner in what's known as Section 35 at Wawona within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. It was Park Service policy at the time to buy up all of Section 35. He led a landowner revolt saying there was no need to do that. I had met him during that time and had--to the degree that you can work with Mr. Cushman--worked fairly effectively with him. And he had said at one point--this is the story of the end of our relationship--"If you ever need my assistance, please call. I'll be glad to try and help." So we had a situation in the mountains where we needed to acquire a piece of land that met all criteria that Chuck Cushman and the Landowners Association had ever laid out over several years. I called Chuck and he agreed to come down and take a look at it. He came down and took a look at it and went home without talking to me. [He] called me up and

said, "Well, John, you know, that's exactly the kind of a piece of land where you ought to be buying. But I can't help you out because I need membership in my organization." That's the last time we ever spoke to each other.

PITT: So even he saw the correctness of buying it, but he wasn't going to help you.

REYNOLDS: Right.

PITT: When I was interviewing Bob he said that Cushman was advising people to file Freedom of Information Act requests. As it happens, I was looking in my files and I found that a member of the Advisory Committee, Peter Ireland, used the Freedom of Information Act to uncover information about Anthony Beilenson and Barry Goldwater, Jr. Can you explain that?

REYNOLDS: I don't know anything about that. I remember that Peter was doing that, but I actually did not remember that he was doing it to find out about Barry Goldwater, Jr. and Tony. Gee, it would be interesting to talk to Bob and refresh [myself] about that. I just don't remember that. I do remember that he was filing Freedom of Information Act stuff to find out everything that he could possibly find out about how we were going about land acquisition and what our policies were. He really got into it on the land [ownership].

PITT: He was suspicious of wrong-doing, or that he was going to expose you somehow?

REYNOLDS: I don't know that he was as suspicious as he was trying to find anything he could find. I wouldn't even say that he had suspicions. I think he had hopes. You've got to be tough to have suspicions about Tony, you know. If there was [anybody] ever honest in the Congress it was Tony Beilenson.

PITT: Something I should have asked you earlier. Was this your first lengthy stay in Los Angeles?

REYNOLDS: Yes, first time I'd ever been there except on business trips.

PITT: What was your impression after you settled in?

REYNOLDS: I loved it. We loved living there. We lived in Camarillo up on the hillside north of the freeway.

PITT: You and your wife.

REYNOLDS: Yes, and son. And actually if you stood on our fence on a clear day you could see the ocean. It was a straight shot. She worked at Point Mugu. They were wonderful days for our family.

PITT: I'm going to refer again to something that Bob Chandler mentioned, and then get your take on it. He said that when he first got started, when the team got set up, that you were having to realize that the state people and private people were worried that the feds were coming in and going to take over. It gradually dissipated, but that that was a suspicion. What is your recollection of that?

REYNOLDS: I think that's actually the case. The tradition of the National Park Service had been that we would establish a line and we would take over everything within it. As you look back to the history of parks coming up through the '20s and '30s and '40s and '50s, and starting to change in the '60s--now remember we're just in the beginning of the '80s so not much time has passed since the beginning of the '60s--we always bought all the land that we could. I mean, that was the objective of the National Park Service. We would take over state lands or other agency lands within the boundary. In 1963 Cape Cod National Seashore was established. That was the first time that we had legislation that would allow for not using the powers of condemnation or buying lands if the local jurisdiction had zoning standards that the Secretary of Interior would approve. That was the first major change in land acquisition policy in the National Park System. Here we are now, just a little less than 20 years later, which isn't a great deal of evolutionary time in government, particularly in land use and land management, coming and saying, We have no intention of buying all the land. We have no intention of taking over the state lands. We would rather work as partners. Don't forget in the same period of time, [or] just before, the Redwood National Park had been established in Northern California and the Park Service had been very clear that it wanted to take over the state parks at Redwood. So as the State Park System saw us coming in the Santa Monica Mountains, they would immediately assume the same thing. With good rationale. So the idea that we were coming in there saying something different, needed a bit of time and a bit of history to see if it was really true or not.

PITT: I imagine there were a lot of meetings, particularly at the outset when people were voicing a lot of objections. Hopefully that dissipated over time.

REYNOLDS: A lot of meetings. A lot of things happened. Another interesting story is I and Sondra Humphries and Eileen Salenik and Nancy Ehorn--although at the time it wasn't Nancy Ehorn, it was Nancy Fries. [We] went down to meet with some homeowners at Point Dume and they believed that we wanted to acquire the headlands at Point Dume. They didn't want us to, and were just almost shocked when not too long into the meeting I said, "We have no intention of acquiring those lands. We'd just as soon the state continued to manage them as well." So as you can imagine, it would take a lot of those kind of experiences for people to say, Well, gee, they really are serious about this.

PITT: On the Claretville property--the Soka property as it's known today--did your team do the best it could to try and secure that property?

REYNOLDS: Absolutely. We tried and tried and tried. We tried everything. Even when I was in Washington, D.C., before this job, we were still trying. There were parts of the Park Service that were wanting to say, Maybe we just ought to give up on that site. [But]

that's such an important part of the Santa Monica Mountains and the future of the Santa Monica Mountains, that it seems to me it's one of those places you don't give in on until it's gone.

PITT: And that time hasn't arrived yet. I mean, you're still working on that idea?

REYNOLDS: That time has not arrived yet. I have no idea how we can acquire it, but you know, it's amazing how many things have happened in the National Park System by somebody just waiting long enough.

PITT: By the way, had you ever met Congressman Phil Burton?

REYNOLDS: No. Unfortunately, I never met him. One of the great sorrows of my Park Service career is that I never had the opportunity to meet him.

PITT: You did meet Beilenson, though.

REYNOLDS: Oh, many, many times. Often enough that I count him as a friend. We recognize each other when we see each other and we talk, and he's offered assistance if I ever would need it, and that kind of thing. Fine man.

PITT: I've talked to many people [and] haven't found a single one who would say a bad word about Anthony Beilenson yet.

REYNOLDS: And I worked really closely with Linda Friedman when she was working for him, so he knew me through that situation. Actually, I'm a little proud of this little thing: He had a staff member when he retired whose name is Melissa Kukro. Melissa was working for him when I was at the Santa Monicas and here, just a few months ago after almost two years of trying, the Park Service hired Melissa. I had a little bit to do with that, I'm proud to say.

PITT: That's nice. Now, Tony speaks of the County Board of Supervisors as being remiss in their duty toward open land, and recreation, and wildlife. Do you have any specific stories or remembrances of dealing with the County Board of Supervisors?

REYNOLDS: I remember we tried to deal with them a lot and never got very far. What is the black woman's name? Brathwaite Burke? First name?

PITT: Yvonne.

REYNOLDS: Yvonne. Brathwaite Burke. Once she was gone, which happened very quickly after I got there, it was just a very frustrating time.

PITT: Evidently the county planners were somewhat different in their perspective, although they didn't prevail in many of the struggles. Is that right?

REYNOLDS: That's correct. And we had a very good relationship with the county planners, both the city and the county planners. You know, Calvin Hamilton was still the head of the City Planning [Agency] and he was very powerful in trying to help save their part of Mulholland, in particular, the city pieces. And then the planning folks in the county were equally of much assistance. And, of course, we had hired Mary Gibson Park from the County park agency and she knew all the county planning people, as well. That was done on purpose.

PITT: How about for the city. Did you have much to do with Councilman Marvin Braude?

REYNOLDS: I didn't have as much to do with him as Bob did. That relationship between Bob and Marvin was sort of a special relationship. They cared and respected each other very, very much. And it's kind of like, don't mess with success.

PITT: But you did mention Anton Calleia, who was Tom Bradley's appointee to the Conservancy. In what connection did you know Anton?

REYNOLDS: I knew him mostly, gosh, I don't even remember any of the issues we worked on much, but he was still working directly for the mayor when I worked with him some. He was very friendly towards the Park Service, and towards the National Recreation Area, and so he was always willing to give advice or to try and help with the City Council, or whatever. I did have a remembrance about the Board of Supervisors. I don't even remember what piece of land this [involved]. What's the woman's name who [acted as] *Wonder Woman*? [Linda Carter]

PITT: I'm drawing a blank.

REYNOLDS: Anyway, you know who I mean. She once went down to testify against something the County Board of Supervisors was doing and . . .

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

PITT: To test your [voice] level, let me remember what we were talking about.

REYNOLDS: Well, I'll tell you what. Let's test it with this. I'm going to ask you to correct the historical record. Today is August 3rd not August 2nd.

PITT: [laughter] Okay. Very good. Thank you.

REYNOLDS: Anyway, Wonder Woman went down and testified and for some reason she decided to use about every foul word that she knew, and it didn't help us out at all. The Board of Supervisors didn't appreciate it.

While we were stopped (referring to adjusting the tape) we talked a lot about the Land Protection Plan, and so on, but we haven't talked at all about some of the things that occurred as a result of the General Management Plan, the long range plan.

PITT: By all means, let's do that.

REYNOLDS: One of the important things that happened is when this was being put together there was a lot of thought about a national recreation area, and protecting watersheds, and some of those kinds of things. We arrived at a sort of strong recreational bias. My growing up--I mean professionally, not as a kid--always led me to believe that anyplace where you've got a lot of natural environment you should figure out what is important about that environment and make that a central part of what the park is all about.

With very little effort, actually, we discovered the wonderful fact that Santa Monica Mountains is part of a Mediterranean ecosystem which only occurs six places in the world, and this was one of the few places that was relatively intact worldwide. [That] made it into one of the key precepts of the General Management Plan and that was reflected in land protection planning in things like the drive to buy all of Zuma Canyon. It was not just a watershed but it was also a somewhat protectable piece of a larger Mediterranean ecosystem. So that came out of the planning effort, as well. I think it turned out to be very important. Art Eck has used that far more expertly than we have or ever did before. The natural characteristics of those mountains in some ways have worldwide significance.

PITT: What is the distinction between the General Protection Plan and the Land Protection Plan? And were you satisfied with the General Management Plan side of it?

REYNOLDS: The General Management Plan, the purpose of that, is to lay out the basic precepts of what we're trying to achieve in the long run both in terms of preserving lands and natural and cultural resources, and in terms of providing for visitor enjoyment. In this case, how we would interact with lots of other jurisdictions and for what purposes. The Land Protection Plan conceptually, and in actuality, is a more detailed plan of how we will go about acquiring the land or rights in land to fulfill the ideas that are in the General Management Plan. Although we did them pretty much together.

PITT: And were you pleased with the outcome?

REYNOLDS: Very much so. I think we set a tone for the future that was as strong as it possibly could have been.

PITT: So a specific document came of each of these? Of the Land Protection? Was there one specific document for that and one for the General Management?

REYNOLDS: That's correct.

PITT: Now about the Conservancy. That evolved during the time you were in the Santa Monica Mountains area. Did you have personal involvement with Joseph Edmiston and the Conservancy board or its foundation, or its advisors?

REYNOLDS: I had lots and lots and lots of involvement with Joe and the Conservancy board. At one point--I think it must have been after Bob left--I was actually the Park Service representative on the Conservancy board. I don't believe I ever was while Bob was there, but I'm not sure of that. But, gosh, I don't know how to describe it, but I had lots of interaction, with Joe in particular.

PITT: And what was your take on that? What were your feelings about Joe and the Conservancy? Was there a rivalry, for example, or was it mostly smooth cooperation?

REYNOLDS: Well, those aren't all the straight choices. Lots of people thought there was a rivalry. I never viewed the strong feelings and the strong sense of direction that Joe and the board exhibited as a rivalry. I always thought that organizations that were working for the same end and the same places, particularly if they have different funding sources, should all be as strong and professional and as politically astute as they can possibly be in the arenas in which they work. And that the difficulties that arise in the inter-agency as a result of that should be the places that we spend time trying to work out rather than spending the effort trying to control each other. I know that lots of people considered Joe and the Conservancy as always trying to take over, and Joe and the Conservancy trying to always be the ones that were out front, and this and that and the other thing. It seemed to me--it still does seem to me--that that's sort of putting your effort into the wrong place to think that way. I always thought, just automatically, if we did a good professional job, which I believe we did, we were at least the equal of the Conservancy, and so we should then use that equality and the energy that came out of individuals to do the most good in the shortest period of time.

PITT: So you had respect.

REYNOLDS: Sure. Joe will tell you he used to get frustrated with me, too, and I used to get frustrated with him, but never because I thought he was trying to do the wrong thing. We had, and still have, although we don't work together much anymore, [what] we had when I was down there was a very wonderful relationship. Not always without argument, but a very wonderful relationship. And I'm sure not everybody will describe it to you that way.

PITT: Not everybody will describe <u>their</u> relationship that way or <u>your</u> relationship?

REYNOLDS: Theirs. I don't know how they'll describe mine.

PITT: Okay.

REYNOLDS: Good distinction.

PITT: One other thing. [About] the Cheeseboro Canyon acquisition, north of 101. The Trust for Public Land and Mr. Huey Johnson were involved in that. Were you there at that time and can you give us any recollection of that?

REYNOLDS: I was. I worked very closely with the TPL representative who pulled that together. Very closely with her. Lisa McGimsey was her name. [She] helped make it happen.

PITT: Why was it different from some of the other acquisitions? Was there some litigation involved in that? In what way was it a little different?

REYNOLDS: That's the one that TPL ended up in litigation, right? In litigation against the previous owner.

PITT: I think so.

REYNOLDS: But in terms of why we were trying to acquire it, the big difference was that the owner was very tenacious [in] representing his own interest and played real hard ball with TPL. Real hard ball. It turned out that [he] actually pulled some illegal [stuff] on TPL.

PITT: But that came later. Your association with the Trust for Public Lands and Huey Johnson and Lisa McGimsey went smoothly and it was a cooperative relationship?

REYNOLDS: Very much so. I spent a lot of time not just on that piece but on other pieces in the mountains trying to prep Lisa on what they might buy and what they might not buy, and why it was important, and how the mountains fit together, and all that kind of stuff.

PITT: I believe that Bob said that when the Advisory Commission was established, that that was when things really got going [and] your planning process got off the ground. Does that sound right?

REYNOLDS: Yes.

PITT: So tell us how the Advisory Commission worked with the Park Service and what was the significance of their coming together and your process moving forward?

REYNOLDS: I think the biggest significance is that it represented a lot of the citizens who had worked so hard to bring it before the Congress and get it passed. It provided the continuity of having some of those same people directly involved with us in a legal way, and to expand the vision of what the place might be and how it might work and how it gets put together. Once we all decided how to go forward together [and presented it] to

the rest of the public [we could] talk about how people [could] agree on things in the larger societal context so that they work. It was very important.

PITT: And by and large, there were good vibes, and consensus even, at the meetings.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. Not to say that there weren't some great arguments. Gee whiz, I think everybody on the planning team at one time or another probably had some really good arguments with everybody on the group. I think that there was very much a feeling of closeness and respect. I mean, I guess I'm sort of an odd duck. I've been actually told since I've been in this job, John, you must be the only person in the National Park Service who really likes advisory commissions. I think they are so absolutely worth the difficulties of working with them in terms of how an agency can deal effectively with the citizens who care. You know, it's almost impossible not to have it be worthwhile.

PITT: As I look at the Land Protection Plan Map I'm seeing a zone line and I'm seeing the boundary of the Recreation Area. From your point of view as a planner, what was the distinction between those two?

REYNOLDS: The boundary line was the area in which the Park Service was authorized to acquire land and take other direct management actions to implement the law and implement the General Management Plan. The zone--I forget my legislative provisions--but the zone at that time was the area in which the Conservancy could work, and it seems to me there was something about federal permits. That the Park Service had a responsibility to comment on any federal action within the zone that could affect the Santa Monica Mountains. Something like that. So from that point of view it's an important line.

PITT: Not for acquiring land in fee simple, or any other way, but for other implications where the federal government might be involved.

REYNOLDS: Right. Gosh, you'd have to ask Joe or somebody who remembered this, but wasn't the zone the same line that the Santa Monica Mountains Planning Commission worked within?

PITT: Yes, almost certainly that is the case. Now, when your team was going and going well--you had a most effective team as you were saying--and then, more or less suddenly, the team broke up. Why did people leave? Did it have anything to do with the fear that James Watt's deconstruction plan was going to undermine you? Or were there other reasons?

REYNOLDS: I'd actually like to ask you a question. When do you see the team actually breaking up and leaving?

PITT: I think when Bob Chandler leaves and perhaps [when] you do. What's your response when I say that?

REYNOLDS: Yes. Okay. I see exactly where you're coming from. Number 1, It didn't have anything to do with James Watt because James Watt was leaving by then. Just the opposite happened when James Watt came in. The team, if it was possible to do so, the team coalesced even more strongly, became even more dedicated to making sure that this place didn't disappear as a unit of the National Park System, and that it's opportunities for protection over the long term were not diminished. We were not going to let James Watt win this battle.

PITT: I'm glad to hear you say this, because that's exactly what Bob was saying also.

REYNOLDS: Even if Bob did call James Watt "shortsighted" on national television. Did he tell you that?

PITT: He didn't mention that exact phrase, [laughter] although he came close to it when he said he was interviewed by national TV and got a rebuke phone call the next day.

REYNOLDS: Well, what happened was he was interviewed and both he and the interviewer thought the interview was over and so they both kind of relaxed. And then all of a sudden the last question came to the interviewer's mind and he turned to Bob--sort of caught Bob a little unawares--and said something like, "What do you think of James Watt trying to get rid of the park?" And Bob hemmed for a second and he said, "Mr. Watt would be shortsighted." And I'll tell you, it was serious for a while. There was a point that Bob actually believed that he would be forced out of the Park Service. Which, of course as you know, never happened. Then all that did with the rest of us, if it was possible, [was] to rally us even more strongly around him as a leader of the idea that had [by that time] become ours.

PITT: So it stiffened your resolve rather than make you think about running away or crumbling.

REYNOLDS: One of the great successes of the folks that got the bill passed was that they instilled in us that their idea was also our idea. They were able to lead us to personalize, not just professionally, but personalize the desire to make that--I mean you can go around and talk to those who are on that team today, and you will find that every one of them still believes that it's their personal responsibility to protect the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: So when I intimated that the team broke up your answer is . . . ?

REYNOLDS: Oh, we did. Many of us moved on to other assignments. Bob's reputation skyrocketed as a result. As you know, he was assigned to Olympic National Park. One of the stories is that in the dog days of when Secretary Watt was threatening to have the park decommissioned, we went to The Cantina--[I'm] sure it had more of a name than that but a place called The Cantina--a whole bunch of us, the ones that were the closest working members of the team. We sat around for several hours that Friday evening sipping on margaritas and eating peanuts. There's a little book that has all the units of the

National Park System in it. We all sat there picking which would be the favorite unit for us to get if they got rid of the park. Where would they move us? Bob Chandler picked Olympic and a couple of years later he became the superintendent of Olympic. I picked North Cascades National Park and three years later I became the superintendent of the North Cascades. I can't remember the rest of them, but it was eerily prophetic.

PITT: So it was not a negative reason for this original team to go elsewhere?

REYNOLDS: No. It was very much sort of the [end of the] first phase of the park and getting it started, leaving it on a solid basis so that it wasn't going to go away. [We] sort of reached that plateau. Some of us as individuals began to see that the next challenge was someplace else. In the Park Service culture it is an incredible honor to be picked as the superintendent of Olympic, so the reward was huge, and for my first superintendency to be asked to come up and join him next door in the state of Washington--which he had something to do with--and be able to take on my own national park that had some needs as well, sort of starting its next phase of life, that happened to several of us.

PITT: So actually you were taking your reputation [and] experiences and going elsewhere. So you thought of it as a positive move.

REYNOLDS: Oh, absolutely.

PITT: But did you leave with regret?

REYNOLDS: I still miss the Santa Monica Mountains. I love coming down to the Santa Monica Mountains. I love dealing with issues there. I try not to express this in front of Art too much because I don't want him to think I'm trying to take over his park [laughter] but Santa Monica issues are still, by God, mine. [laughter]

PITT: And a few moments back you were saying [that] part of this ethic you derived from the people on the scene--the grassroots people, organizations, and individuals. Is that right?

REYNOLDS: Absolutely. You know some of the players. But if you listen to what's in the hearts and the depths of the minds of people like Sue Nelson and Margot Feuer, Jill Swift, and Dave Brown you just cannot help but grow philosophically in your own self. You just can't help doing it.

PITT: That's a high tribute. What were your major accomplishments as you look back on that first tour?

REYNOLDS: Some of them will probably sound odd to you. One was actually completing a Land Protection Plan that was designed to get us through the strictures of the Watt administration and not leave the park in a vulnerable position, and I think we were able to do that. One was keeping all of the Cheeseboro and Palo Comado Canyon portions of the park in the boundary and not letting [them] go. One of them was bringing

the idea of the Mediterranean ecosystem and the ability to protect a pretty nice piece of it as part of the policy of what the park was all about. I don't know if you talked to Art Eck very long. These days you won't be able to stay away from what that's turned in to.

PITT: He did mention that to me. Yes.

REYNOLDS: Oh, gee, I don't know. It's hard to say.

PITT: What you've already said is helpful.

REYNOLDS: I actually look back on that and I think it was day after day of success. It was wonderful.

PITT: So Chandler is right about you as an optimistic person.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes.

PITT: In what year did you leave?

REYNOLDS: Nineteen eighty-four.

PITT: And you went on to one or more places. And then you come to San Francisco to the regional office, and now you are back in the chain of command about the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Is that correct?

REYNOLDS: That's absolutely correct.

PITT: So now you have a perspective that very few people have of 20 years. What has happened in the Santa Monica Mountains in the ensuing 20 years? What's your assessment of its history?

REYNOLDS: When I take a look at the map of what the state--including the Conservancy and the Park Service--now own, I am amazed at how much success has taken place. You know, the vision is working and it's never stopped.

I think the next challenge, and you know this is where Art is so wonderful because he agrees, is we continue to buy the Backbone Trail and continue to purchase the land that ought to be purchased, and so on. The next challenge is to make the Santa Monica Mountains a part of the everyday environmental educational base of what the natural environment is all about to the youth of Los Angeles. Art's idea--and it is Art's idea, he pointed it out first--is that something like 13 percent of all the youth in the nation are going to live in the L.A. Basin in the next 25 years, or something. I've forgotten the exact statistic. Number one, that's a huge number of people, number two, it's a very diverse bunch of people, and number three, it's a huge percentage of where the future leadership of this country's going to come from. No matter how you cut it. And the more of those people we can connect to an understanding of what the natural environment

means to continuation of life on the earth, then we will have begun to fulfill the second great promise of the Santa Monica Mountains.

PITT: Very clearly stated. So you're sharing Art's vision for the future of the park on the eve of the next millennium, anyway.

REYNOLDS: [William] Bill Anderson and Marti Leicester, and a couple of others in particular--to some degree Ruth Kilday, too--always had the idea that the Santa Monica Mountains could be an important educational base. But Art Eck has taken the idea and made it into something far more poignant and far more important even than we thought of it back then. We saw the glimmer of the promise and I think Art has been able to turn it into something even more brilliant than we ever thought of. And Bill Anderson and Marti Leicester were ahead of all the rest of the National Park Service in those days in what they could foresee as the importance of that place by far. They were real heroes.

PITT: I haven't had the pleasure of meeting or talking to them. But I have talked to Art.

REYNOLDS: You know Bill lives down there.

PITT: Does he? I hope in the future I get a chance to do that.

REYNOLDS: You know, he was part of the threesome of Bob, myself, and Bill Anderson. Bob may not have told you [that] we were known as "Wing It," and "Slick," and "Ace."

PITT: Why is that?

REYNOLDS: Well, Bob Chandler, I'd never seen him give a speech with notes and so he was "Wing It." Bill was a guy who would have an idea every 25 seconds, and he was slick in front of the public, so he was "Slick." And somehow I got "Ace." [laughter] Anyway, those were our internal nicknames.

PITT: Now remind me. What are your responsibilities in your office today? They must be vastly different than they were 20 years ago. Specifically with respect to the Santa Monica Mountains.

REYNOLDS: My responsibilities in the Santa Monicas are the same as they are for the other--I think it's the other 53--parks in this region. I'm responsible for the leadership [and] the executive direction of all the parks in this region, which [are] the National Park units in Nevada, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and the Pacific Islands. In addition, the National Park Service has program activities outside of the national parks: [They include] the National Register of Historic Places and technical assistance programs for communities to do recreation or conservation work. So I'm responsible for the executive direction of those programs here in the West, as well.

PITT: So your perspective is a very big one. You're seeing the large picture when you talk about the Santa Monica Mountains and its future.

REYNOLDS: I hope so.

PITT: Is there anything else you want to mention? Is there anything we've left out? If nothing occurs to you today, but something does in the next days, you can let me know, you can call me, and we can add it.

REYNOLDS: Good. I might well do that.

PITT: If not, you can also add something in writing when you get the transcription.

REYNOLDS: You were talking about successes. We didn't mention the cultural resources. And in particular the relationships with the . . .

PITT: Native American community?

REYNOLDS: Yes.

PITT: I'd be delighted to hear you on that subject.

REYNOLDS: I think one of the successes I really helped create in people's minds, and then have happen, was up at the Rancho Sierra Vista. [It was] the creation of the Native American Outdoor Cultural Area and the Cultural Center, itself, and the importance of the Chumash, and really recognizing the importance of the Chumash as a part of the mountains. Charlie, oh, what's his name?

PITT: Cooke?

REYNOLDS: Yes. Charlie Cooke, the chief of the Chumash and I became very good friends. I think we were pretty successful in integrating the idea that the Chumash should always be a part of what happens to these mountains. I don't know what's happened to the Gabrieleño at the other end, at the east end. You know, there were only a couple of people left and it was not a tribe . . .

[doorbell rings]

REYNOLDS: . . . that was left in big enough quantity to [deal] with, so it's not as well formed. But the relationship with the Chumash in large part grew between Charlie and me. And then Phil--what's Phil's name?

PITT: Phil Holmes?

REYNOLDS: Yes. And then Phil Holmes came along and really took it over.

PITT: And this was something that your planning team perceived early on as well?

REYNOLDS: Yes. And actually there was a point at which the bowl of Rancho Sierra Vista was going to be developed for recreation purposes. One of the big changes we went through during the planning effort was recognizing the significance of that area to the Chumash, and the significance of Boney Mountain, and respecting that in the final plans.

PITT: And Satwiwa is an interpretative center today and becoming better known, I think.

REYNOLDS: It sure is.

PITT: And [that is] part of that educational process you were referring to.

REYNOLDS: Right. And with that I'll let you go answer the doorbell.

PITT: You heard the doorbell. That's a good sign about the technology. But I do want to thank you very kindly . . .

REYNOLDS: It's a pleasure.

PITT: . . . for taking time out and for letting me grill you. It was a real pleasure. I think it contributes greatly to our knowledge of the history.

REYNOLDS: Leonard, if I can do more for you, just holler.

PITT: Thank you so much.

End of Side B

End of Interview

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT WAS SENT TO SOME INTERVIEWEES AS A WAY OF JOGGING MEMORIES. IT WAS INTENDED TO HIGHLIGHT CERTAIN EVENTS AND IS IN NO WAY MEANT TO SERVE AS A COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS.

--L.P.

WORKING CHRONOLOGY:
THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS, 1962-1979

1962

- Anthony C. Beilenson elected to state Assembly, replacing Tom Rees.
- L.A. County Supervisors abortive attempt to launch a county park [Topanga?] through a bond issue.
- Pepperdine University shows an interest in Malibu as site for campus.

1963

- Movement to create SMMNRA is, according to Marvin Braude, launched in his home, at a meeting attended by eight people [unnamed].

1964

- Struggle to stop huge hotel and golf course development, and create a state park at Point Mugu. [J.T. Edmiston's first park battle?]
- Ralph Stone founds Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains, Parks and Seashore [or in 1963?], with tax exempt status, to lobby against the Mulholland city-county-state expressway at the mountains ridge, and to back the State Park Bond Act of 1964.
- State Park Bond Act passes, making SM mountains parks possible.
- Pacific Highlands project by Land Resources Corp. is stalled by zoning obstacles.
- Publication of *Santa Monica Mts. (sic) Study, Requested by House* [state Assembly?] *Resolution No. 116, Statutes of 1964* (Sacramento, Calif.: California State Parks Commission, December 1964), a pamphlet of 61 pp., plus maps (December).

1965

- Jesse Unruh rejects the state's first 1964 *Mts. Study*, on Topanga (March), but accepts the one in May.
- Braude elected to L.A. City Council, pushes Mulholland Highway that is opposed by the Friends.
- Friends fight the Malibu-Whitnall Freeway, the Reseda-to-the-sea project and the redevelopment of the Venice canals [when?].

1966

- Friends of SM Mts. (Susan Nelson and Ralph Stone) work with Beilenson and William Penn Mott Jr. to secure park land using state bond issue. Legislature passes State Park Bond Act to use the 1964 bond money.
- State, county and federal governments acquire SM Mts. land for parks.
- Point Mugu State Park is created in Ventura County [Beilenson's bill?].
- Ellen Stern Harris lobbies for the Friends in state Legislature.
- Beilenson is elected to state Senate (Nov.).
- Susan Nelson and the Friends defeat the Mulholland expressway, supported by Braude, by lobbying the State Highway Commission (battle continues 1966-69).

1967

- Reagan inaugurated as governor (Jan. 5); State Parks under George Rackleman makes the most significant park acquisitions [when?].
- State Parks does a fourth supplement to the 1964 *Mts. Study*, this time on Mugu, which Unruh and the legislature finally accept.
- Topanga State Park is established.

1968

- William Penn Mott, Jr. is Director of State Department of Parks and Recreation, a key player in acquiring park land.

1970

- A conference to Save Malibu Canyon is organized.
- Beilenson is reelected to state Senate (Nov.).
- Alphonzo Bell carries first national recreation bill.
- California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 passes into law.
- Legislature establishes Ventura-Los Angeles Mtn. and Coastal Study Commission.
- Interior Secty. requests the Bureau of Outdoor Rec. (Pac. Southwest Region for Santa Monicas) examine the problem of all lands near metropolitan centers in US.
- Reagan defeats Jesse Unruh and is re-elected governor.

1971

- Trippet Ranch is added to Topanga State Park; Sierra Club initiates walks.
- L.A. City Council creates Citizens Advisory Committee to support Mulholland Drive as a City Scenic Parkway (Oct. 1971).
- Advocates for Better Coastal Development (ABCD), a group of 15 land holders pressing for development; issues its own report on the mountains [mid-year?].

1972

- Advocates for Better Coastal Development (ABCD) spawns a new group, "Concerned Citizens for Local Government."
- Ventura-Los Angeles Mountain and Coastal Study Commission (est. 1970) presents report to Legislature (Mar.); new legislation is introduced into state Senate to create a "Ventura-Los Angles Mountain and Coastal Conservation and Development

Commission" to implement the Study Commission report (Mar.-Apr.); this bill is defeated in Nov.
- Friends of SMMs publish illustrated brochure, *Needed for California: The Great Seashore and Mountain Park,* written by Joan Mills, Sue Nelson, Jim Stevens, and Ralph Stone. They mail brochure to every member of Congress.
- Grassroots fight NPS brass who hope to stop all NRAs.
- Santa Monica scientific study by Ray Murray.
- *Report of Citizens Advisory Committee on Mulholland Scenic Parkway* (Sept.); Ira Yellin heads the committee.
- Congressman Teague (Ventura) introduces bill for "Toyon National Park." No hearings held, bill dies.
- Betty Jo Hodge publishes, "Toyon: Potential Parkland in the Santa Monica Mountains," *National Parks and Conservation Magazine*, Sept. 1972, pp. 18-23.
- Pepperdine opens Malibu campus, after 10 years of planning and development.
- Braude group fights land development from Topanga to the 405 freeway [when?]; Headland Development Co. hires I. M. Pei who presents a plan for a one-mile high spire condo, allowing everything else in the Headland area to remain natural and wild.[when?].
- Braude resolution to convert abandoned Nike site at Mandeville Canyon to open space (Jan. 20).
- Ray Murray, Interior Dept. planner, starts Bureau of Outdoor Recreation study on SM Mountains [or did it happen in Sept. 1970?].
- Calif. Supreme Court Rules that Calif Environmental Quality Act of 1970 applies to private land as well as state-funded.
- Nixon re-elected Pres. (Nov.); Rogers C.B. Morton is Interior Secty. (1971-1974).
- National Urban Park Committee headed by Ira Yellin supports Calif. Senate Bill 1368 as a federal condition for a national urban park.
- UCLA steps up archaeological survey of SM Mts.

1973
- Tom Bradley is elected mayor (will serve until 1993); appoints Anton Calleia to advisory commission.
- L.A. City Council adopts concept of a 2-lane park road and recreation corridor along Mulholland Drive.
- Friends of SM Mts. proposes acquisition of 100,000 acres; helps obtain 20,000 acres of new state and county park land and beaches.
- Point Mugu State Park is enlarged.
- Rep. Alphonzo Bell (D-Santa Monica) begins submitting an annual bill on Santa Monica Mountains National Park; is backed by Rep. Barry Goldwater, Jr.
- Assembly passes Paul Priolo (R-Santa Monica) bill to add 3,100 to Topanga Canyon park.

1974
- State Assembly approves A.B. 1254 calling for establishment of a conservation and development commission for the SM Mts.

- Nixon resigns Aug. 9, 1974; Gerry Ford replaces him. Rogers C.B. Morton is Secty. of Interior.
- Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation is founded, for research and processing of land purchases (with tax deduction, but not for lobbying). Nelson is coordinator. Its functions later shift to the Conservancy.
- U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation recommends that the state maintain total control over the mountains, without federal jurisdiction.
- U.S. Sen. Gene Tunney authors SB 1270 for a "Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore National Urban Park."
- Malibu Creek State Park is established.

1975

- Jerry Brown is inaugurated (Jan. 5).
- Susan Nelson becomes president of the Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains.
- Assembly passes Paul Priolo's Backbone Trail legislation.
- Tunney and Cranston sponsor SB 759, "Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Urban National Park" (Feb.).
- Sens. Bennett, Cranston, Tunney, and Johnson author, "Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Urban Recreation Area (Greenline Parks)."
- Cong. Goldwater, Roybal, and Waxman author "Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Urban National Park."
- Gail Osherenko hired by Beilenson (fall), will work in Sacto. until 1976, when he goes to Wash. D.C.

1976

- Sens. Beilenson and Smith's Coastal Act gives Coastal Commission jurisdiction five miles inland of the shore.
- Jimmy Carter elected president.
- Beilenson elected to represent 23rd Cong. Dist. (Nov.).
- State Legislature establishes Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission.
- Malibu Creek State Park opens to the public.
- Cong. Johnston (La.) introduces "Greenline Bill" for one-time funding of SM Mts.--it's heard in Senate but not House.
- Topanga State Park reaches 7,800 acres.
- Roberti-Z'Berg Urban Open Space and Recreation Program provides $25 million a year for 3 years for grants to cities, counties, etc. (May).

1977

- Jimmy Carter inaugurated (Jan. 20).
- Beilenson enters Congress (Jan.); Osherenko is his legislative assistant (until 1979).
- Howard Berman's AB 163 calls for Comprehensive Planning Commission to prepare a plan for the "conservation and development of the mountains consistent with the preservation of the resource."

- Legislature creates Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, as part of the state Resources Agency. Slated to lapse at end of 1994. First meeting is March 1977.
- Sue Nelson testifies before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.
- Peter Strauss buys 64-acre Lake Enchanto property in 1977 (in 1987 will sell the property to Conservancy).
- Sagebrush Rebellion erupts in Cuyahoga Valley NRA, Ohio (summer).
- George Rackleman, of state DPR, holds 14 hearings about Point Mugu, Malibu Creek and Topanga; issues report on resources, management and environmental impact.
- Reps. Barry Goldwater, Jr. and Robert Lagomarsino introduce HR 380 for a "Santa Monica Mountains Urban Park" (Jan.).
- Beilenson introduces SM Mts. and Channel Islands National Park and Seashore Act (HR 7264); bill dies after hearings (spring).
- Beilenson, Burton, Murphy, Sebelius, and VIPs are led on tour of SM Mts. by Sue Nelson, Jill Swift, Margo Feuer, etc.; commit selves to preserve the area (Aug.).
- Burton presents idea for the omnibus parks bill (fall).

1978

- Beilenson publishes, "What Future for the Santa Monicas," *National Parks and Conservation Magazine,* v. 52, no. 2, Feb. 1978, pp. 10-15.
- USDI publishes, *National Urban Recreation Study, Executive Report* (Feb.); Cecil Andrus is director.
- Joel Wachs proposes a paleontological park for No. Benedict Canyon (March).
- Phil Burton's House Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs approves National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. This includes Beilenson's bill establishing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (May 15).
- Comprehensive Planning Commission sends plan to state and federal govts. (July).
- Omnibus Bill goes to conference committee (Oct.).
- Agoura fire burns all of Malibu Creek State Park, including *MASH* set (Oct. 23).
- Carter signs Omnibus Bill (Nov. 10) protecting the scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural, archaeological, and public health benefits of the SM Mts., including the *unique* Mediterranean chaparral ecosystem. It gives the Interior Secty. responsibility to "Manage the recreation area in a manner which will preserve and enhance its scenic, natural, and historic setting." Congress sets ceiling of $125 million for purchases in 5 years. Beilenson obtains $19.7 million for land purchases.
- Cecil Andrus is Interior secretary.
- Architect Christopher Wojciechowski collects property options for Montevideo Country Club in upper Topanga (predecessor to Canyon Oaks Estates).
- Friends issue their mountains map.
- Friends potluck victory party at Sue Nelson's place (Nov.).
- Beilenson reelected to Congress (Nov.).
- Robert S. Chandler is appointed first supt. of SMM recreation area (Dec.?).

1979

- NPS opens office at 2301 Ventura Blvd., develops staff (April).

- NPS press conference reveals preliminary boundary map (May); six public meetings.
- NPS planning workshops (Sept. 10).
- William Webb appointed asst. supt. (Nov.).
- Friends work to extend SMMNRA boundaries into Ventura Co.
- NPS produces an "Issues Paper on Claretville," (later sold to Soka).
- Berman bill establishes SMMNRA Advisory Commission as an advisory body only. He favors John Zierold of Sierra Club to head the commission.
- Struggle over Canyon Oaks Estates, 620-acre luxury housing development in upper Topanga.
- Smithsonian article, "Los Angeles Lands a Huge New Park If It Can Land the Land Required," July 1979, pp. 27-35 (includes photo of Sue Nelson).

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