

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

HON. BURT M. HENSON

California State Assemblyman, 1963 - 1966

September 28, 1988
Ventura, California

By Enid Hart Douglass
Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None

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PREFACE

On September 25, 1985, Governor George Deukmejian signed into law A.B. 2104 (Chapter 965 of the Statutes of 1985). This legislation established, under the administration of the California State Archives, a State Government Oral History Program "to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California's legislative and executive history."

The following interview is one of a series of oral histories undertaken for inclusion in the state program. These interviews offer insights into the actual workings of both the legislative and executive processes and policy mechanisms. They also offer an increased understanding of the men and women who create legislation and implement state policy. Further, they provide an overview of issue development in California state government and of how both the legislative and executive branches of government deal with issues and problems facing the state.

Interviewees are chosen primarily on the basis of their contributions to and influence on the policy process of the state of California. They include members of the legislative and executive branches of the state government as well as legislative staff, advocates, members of the media, and other people who played significant roles in specific issue areas of major and continuing importance to California.

By authorizing the California State Archives to work cooperatively with oral history units at California colleges and universities to conduct interviews, this program is structured to take advantage of the resources and expertise in oral history available through California's several institutionally based programs.

Participating as cooperating institutions in the State Government Oral History Program are:

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The establishment of the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program marks one of the most significant commitments made by any state toward the preservation and documentation of its governmental history. It supplements the often fragmentary historical written record by adding an organized primary source, enriching the historical information available on given topics and allowing for more thorough historical analysis. As such, the program, through the preservation and publication of interviews such as the one which follows, will be of lasting value to current and future generations of scholars, citizens, and leaders.

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

This interview is printed on acid-free paper.



BURT M. HENSON

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer/Editor

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Interview Time and Place

September 28, 1988
Judge Henson's home in Ventura, California
Afternoon session of two hours

Editing

The interviewer/editor checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings and verified proper names. Insertions by the editor are bracketed.

On October 31, 1988, the edited transcript was forwarded to Judge Henson, who made only minor emendations. He returned the approved transcript January 27, 1989.

The interviewer/editor prepared the introductory materials.

Papers

Judge Henson has a few papers at his home.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the Oral History Program Office, Claremont Graduate School, along with the records relating to the interview. Master tapes are deposited in the California State Archives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Burt M. Henson was born on May 28, 1926 in Oakland, California. Shortly afterward, the family moved to Escalon, a small town near Modesto, California. He attended the Escalon public school system. Immediately after high school graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on the U.S.S. Warrick as a radio operator during World War II.

When Mr. Henson returned to California, he attended Modesto Junior College and then transferred to Stanford University, earning his A.B. degree in political science in 1950 and an LL.B. from Stanford Law School in 1952. He accepted a position as Deputy District Attorney in Ventura County. In 1958, Mr. Henson went into private law practice with the firm Johnston, Lucking & Henson. He also was active in local politics, becoming president of the Ventura County Democratic Club in 1961.

Mr. Henson was elected to the Thirty-seventh Assembly District seat in 1962 and served two terms. He was a member of these committees: Natural Resources, Planning and Public Works; Water; Criminal Procedure; Public Health; and Ways and Means. Mr. Henson sponsored bills which reformed the licensing system for contractors, reorganized the Ventura County court system, created Point Magu State Park, and established a state college for Ventura County.

In 1966, Mr. Henson was appointed to the Ventura County Municipal Court and remained on the bench for twenty years. Judge Henson is now retired, operating a travel agency and writing travel articles with his wife Harriet Kosmo Henson, the former Mayor of the City of Ventura.

[Session 1, September 28, 1988]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

DOUGLASS: Judge Henson, you were born in Oakland in 1926.

HENSON: Right.

DOUGLASS: How did your family happen to be living in Oakland?

HENSON: My father was a carpenter there. Shortly after I was born, we moved to Escalon, California, which is near Modesto. He became a farmer.

DOUGLASS: So you were not in Oakland very long.

HENSON: No. One year after I was born.

DOUGLASS: What kind of farming was he into?

HENSON: It was a small farm, a typical family farm. We had a dairy. We had twenty acres. Things did not go well. Of course, we bought the property in 1927 at a very high price, and 1929 came along. We lost the farm. We rented it back. We bought another place and scrimped along.

DOUGLASS: A miserable depression experience. Those were the times for that.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did you like being on the farm?

HENSON: I didn't like it at all. My father wanted me to take over the farm, but the farm father is sort of a dictator. He wants things done his way and he wants them done now. He will not tolerate any difference of opinion. I left as soon as I could.

DOUGLASS: Because you figured you didn't even want to take it over, eventually, if he was going to be running the show.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did you have brothers?

HENSON: I didn't have any brothers. I had one sister.

DOUGLASS: If the farm was going to be run by someone, it would be you or perhaps your sister.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What finally happened to the farm? Did it stay in the family?

HENSON: No. It was sold. My father died, and my mother sold it. She moved into town and remarried. The farm is still there.

DOUGLASS: You graduated from high school. Did you go to Modesto to high school?

HENSON: I went to Escalon. It is a very small town. About 2,000.

DOUGLASS: And it had its own high school?

HENSON: It had its own high school. There were only about four or five hundred in the high school.

DOUGLASS: So you went all through school in Escalon?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Were you interested in any particular thing when you came out of high school?

HENSON: No. I really wasn't. I was not a very good student in high school. Those were difficult times. I joined the navy just as soon as I could because the war was on then. It was 1944.

DOUGLASS: Did you join immediately after you graduated from high school or toward the end of your senior year?

HENSON: At the end of my senior year. I think I graduated on Thursday and I left on Saturday. I had it all planned out.

DOUGLASS: Was there a reason why you chose the navy?

HENSON: I had an uncle who was in the navy, and he influenced me to go into the navy.

DOUGLASS: Where were you first serving in the navy?

HENSON: I went to San Diego. Then I went to Los Angeles to a radio school and then to the South Pacific on a ship. I stayed there.

DOUGLASS: And you were in that arena for the remainder of the war?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did that experience have any effect upon you as to what you wanted to do next?

HENSON: It certainly filled me with motivation to go to college because I saw the difference between

officers and enlisted men. All the officers had been to college. I didn't like being an enlisted man. So it gave me great motivation to go to college.

DOUGLASS: Had you done any particular work in the navy?

HENSON: I was a radio operator.

DOUGLASS: So you saw some of the world and learned a little bit about what you thought made life tick. [Laughter]

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: You came back after your discharge in '45?

HENSON: No. It was the middle of '46.

DOUGLASS: You went to Modesto Junior College?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Was that in order to get started on a college education?

HENSON: Yes. I had very poor grades. I could not get into any other college. So, it was a convenient place.

DOUGLASS: That was supposed to be a good junior college.

HENSON: It was very good. I really enjoyed it. It gave me a great start.

DOUGLASS: And did you soon have your sights on where you wanted to go for your bachelor's degree?

HENSON: No. I had a difficult time trying to decide. I had a difficult time deciding on a major. I had a difficult time going on to another college. I finally turned to social sciences. I was

thinking about education. Then I went to Stanford [University]. I was urged to go to law school; so I went into law school.

DOUGLASS: At Stanford, was your bachelor's degree in political science?

HENSON: I did two years at Modesto and only one undergraduate year at Stanford. They had a program there that you could go into law school at the end of your junior year.

DOUGLASS: So there was an overlap.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: With that do you end up with an LL.B. [Bachelor of Laws]?

HENSON: An LL.B and also an A.B. [Bachelor of Arts].

DOUGLASS: You end with both degrees. But they are not awarded until the end of the whole thing. Is that right?

HENSON: I think we got our degree the next year. I didn't go to graduation.

DOUGLASS: What is the year of your LL.B. then?

HENSON: It is 1952.

DOUGLASS: Did you like law school?

HENSON: Very good. Yes.

DOUGLASS: Were you interested in any particular phase of the law?

HENSON: I liked trial work and criminal law.

DOUGLASS: Somewhere in here you were married. I don't

know when.

HENSON: Yes. I was married in 1953. But that didn't work out. So I came to Ventura. I went to work in the San Joaquin [County] district attorney's office. I had a problem with my spouse at that time, and I had some other problems. I came to Ventura to make a fresh start.

DOUGLASS: Were you a deputy in the San Joaquin district attorney's office?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Is that a fairly typical position that a young lawyer out of a good law school might go to if he is interested in criminal law?

HENSON: Yes. That's typical.

DOUGLASS: To get that experience. Besides the personal problems, was it an interesting office to work in?

HENSON: It was too close to home, and I needed to get away.

DOUGLASS: Why did you choose Ventura?

HENSON: It just happened to come up. I was looking around for a job and this happened to come up.

DOUGLASS: So you became the deputy . . .

HENSON: I became the deputy district attorney here in 1954.

DOUGLASS: Is that where you met your next wife?

HENSON: Yes. We got married in around 1957. She grew up in Ventura. Her parents owned the Pierpont

Inn.

DOUGLASS: Oh, yes. Her name was Nancy Gleichman.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: You have five daughters, I believe.

HENSON: I have two adopted, of hers, one from my first marriage, and two with her.

DOUGLASS: Did you have all those youngsters living in your home?

HENSON: Four of them.

DOUGLASS: So you had a busy household.

HENSON: A busy household.

DOUGLASS: Then in 1958, I gather that you decided to go into general practice.

HENSON: I went into private practice.

DOUGLASS: You left the district attorney's office. Was it general or criminal?

HENSON: It was general. It was a small county in those days, and attorneys were in general practice at that time.

DOUGLASS: Were you on your own?

HENSON: No. I was with another attorney in Camarillo by the name of [Benjamin] Ruffner. He became a judge. Then I went into another firm, Johnston, Lucking and Henson in Ventura and served there until I was appointed a judge.

DOUGLASS: Did you have a name for that firm?

HENSON: Ruffner and Henson. From 1958 to '60.

DOUGLASS: That was from 1958 to '60, and then you were with the other firm. Johnston, Lucking and Henson.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: How long did you keep that practice? Did you sustain that through the time you were in the legislature?

HENSON: I did. But there was not much time for practice. I was a member of the firm, practiced when I could, but there were great time limitations.

DOUGLASS: That was kind of a balancing act.

HENSON: A lot of them try to do it. It is very difficult.

DOUGLASS: Particularly, the distance from Ventura to Sacramento.

HENSON: That is what it is. The logistical problems are very difficult because it took two days out of the week just to get back and forth.

DOUGLASS: Whereas the lawyers who lived in northern California tended to be able to manage that much better.

HENSON: Right.

DOUGLASS: Let me pick up on your political activities. Were you active in the party once you settled here in Ventura?

HENSON: Yes. I became active in the Democratic club. In those days, they had what they called the

Council of Democratic Clubs, the CDC. These were Democratic clubs throughout the state. I think they had just one club at that time, the Ventura County club. I became active in that. I became active in [Edmund G.] Pat Brown's [Sr.] governor's campaign in 1958 and in [Senator John F.] Kennedy's presidential election in 1960, just as a precinct worker.

DOUGLASS: You were in it from the beginning. You were involved in party politics and you liked it.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What caused you to run for office? Had you had this on your mind if an opportunity came up?

HENSON: Not really. It came about rather suddenly. It is a long set of circumstances. In 1961, Senator [James J.] McBride died, and there was a special election. At that time, I was president of the Ventura Democratic club. We had a bloody special election to fill that vacancy. And that is when [Robert J.] Lagomarsino, a Republican, was elected with the minority of the vote, since there were two Democrats who split the Democratic vote.

This caused some deep feelings. The assemblyman, [Rex M.] Cunningham, had run for that senate seat and lost. As time went on, there was a group in the county that were of CDC

oriented. They hung together and were fairly liberal. They were anti-Cunningham, who was the incumbent. They had an endorsing convention and nominated a fellow named [Leslie H.] Maland to run against the incumbent, Rex Cunningham. Some of us were very upset by this whole situation. We didn't like the people who were maneuvering behind the scenes to do this. We didn't like Cunningham all that much, but we thought that we should stick with the incumbent. We had been with Cunningham through the special election.

All of a sudden, Cunningham decided that he didn't want to run. He called me and said, "Will you run?" I thought for a day and said, "All right. I'll do it." I was so angry with the other group that it was sort of a negative type of thing.

DOUGLASS: It sounds like a mess.

HENSON: It was a rivalry that split the Democratic party where one side just hated the other.

DOUGLASS: Was this to do with the CDC factor?

HENSON: Yes. It was CDC versus the anti-CDC. And I was the anti-CDC. We ran against the endorsed candidate of the CDC. This caused all kinds of problems. I didn't realize it at the time, but [Assemblyman] Jesse [M.] Unruh became involved in it. He was anti-CDC, so he supported me behind the scenes in that election.

DOUGLASS: That was what I was beginning to think about.

HENSON: Right. I did not know him or anything like that. But he was anti-CDC. So he supported me.

DOUGLASS: So you had gone from being very interested in CDC to being quite turned off by this?

HENSON: Yes. There was so much hypocrisy involved and so much machinery behind the scenes.

DOUGLASS: Why was that, do you suppose?

HENSON: I really don't know. Something happens when people get into politics. They become cunning, conniving, maneuvering people. They do all kinds of silly things which are irritating.

DOUGLASS: So, do you feel they lost the goal or their principal purpose?

HENSON: I really didn't know. I knew they were not in tune with the people. Ventura County is more of a conservative county. Even though there was a Democratic registration, it was a conservative Democratic group.

DOUGLASS: How much notice did Cunningham give you?
Because I noted he resigned on April 22nd and the primary would be in June.

HENSON: It was only a couple of days.

DOUGLASS: Did you have time even to file?

HENSON: I had only a few days to file. It was a last minute thing.

DOUGLASS: Had he just had it?

HENSON: He didn't think he could win, I think. He had personal problems with his family and so forth, along the way. I think he thought he was going to lose.

DOUGLASS: So he backed you. He told you that he was going to do this and he wanted you to run?

HENSON: Yes. He backed me. That's right.

DOUGLASS: What did you think when that opportunity came?

HENSON: I thought it was just a long shot anyway. The other candidate had been going for a while and had a pretty good campaign mounted. So I didn't really know if we could do anything at all. I was just going to run.

DOUGLASS: Had you ever thought about running if you had the chance? Had that entered your mind?

HENSON: I sort of had, but I really had not given it serious thought. It just happened very suddenly.

DOUGLASS: That's really sudden. [Laughter]

HENSON: Isn't it something? You become a candidate, then you spend a few days thinking, "Why did I get into this stupid thing?" Because everybody is maneuvering around then to do this and to do that.

DOUGLASS: What forces grouped around you?

HENSON: The anti-CDC forces.

DOUGLASS: So Maland was the candidate of CDC. What kinds of things did you do in that brief time you had?

HENSON: We had a good campaign--believe it or not--of supporters who were just forged together by negative feelings toward the other group. We just put it together. There were a couple of gentlemen that really worked very hard on it. It worked out very well.

DOUGLASS: They must have done a terrific job.

HENSON: Yes. They did.

DOUGLASS: Did you do much speaking?

HENSON: Yes. I was a pretty good speaker at that time. I had been in the district attorney's office. I had support from law enforcement groups and other groups.

DOUGLASS: Do you think you were able to appeal to the more conservative Democrats? In terms of winning the primary. That was your first goal, obviously.

HENSON: I suppose so. Yes.

DOUGLASS: You would get law enforcement people. Did you get any key endorsements?

HENSON: Not really. Not at that time.

DOUGLASS: You said you didn't know it at the time, but afterwards you learned that some of Jesse Unruh's people were doing something.

HENSON: Yes. He had worked behind the scenes and got some organizational support from some organizational groups that I had never heard of.

DOUGLASS: Did they come in and help with the campaign?

HENSON: They had put some money into the campaign. I got some money. I got some organizational support. I am trying to think of a particular group. The state employees association. Some oil companies. The Council of Catholic Hospitals.

DOUGLASS: These are private organizations that would be interested. They gave some campaign contributions.

HENSON: Yes, support.

DOUGLASS: Money would have been an immediate problem since you had not had any time to get started on this, I would think.

HENSON: Yes. I used some of my own money at the time.

DOUGLASS: All right. How did you feel when the primary was won?

HENSON: I felt great. So then I felt we could win in the general election because the Republicans had nominated a fairly nondescript man. We had quite a registration edge at the time. We had 13,000 more Democrats than Republicans in the county.

DOUGLASS: To just comment. You beat Maland by double. I have it was 15,791 to 9,225. That is quite a showing. You must have been really pleased with that.

HENSON: It was a very good result.

DOUGLASS: So, given the registration of the county, you

thought you had a good shot?

HENSON: A very good shot. Yes.

DOUGLASS: The man you ran against was John S. Locke.

HENSON: John Locke. He had been the county treasurer. A nice gentleman, a nice man, and this sort of thing. But kind of advanced in age and not really an avid campaigner. He had a lot of money to work with it, but he didn't seem to go over. So, I did much better at speaking engagements and coming across with people better than he was.

DOUGLASS: What kind of campaign activities would have been typical of that period? What would you do?

HENSON: The things we did in those days were we put out a lot of signs. We stood out in parking lots, shopping centers, handing out cards. Wherever there was a big plant, at quitting time we would gather around and hand out cards. We would be visible at parades and public gatherings. Pass out cards and just make personal contacts that way.

DOUGLASS: How about radio and the press?

HENSON: Well, the Ventura press was friendly. Radio. There was not much involved there.

DOUGLASS: Did you put a lot in ads?

HENSON: In that first campaign, we spent less than \$10,000.

DOUGLASS: That is very good.

HENSON: Interesting.

DOUGLASS: Did you have community meetings where you would talk? Like in high school gymnasiums.

HENSON: Yes. We would have debates. The League of Women Voters sponsored debates. Other groups would sponsor debates, and I did pretty well at those things.

DOUGLASS: Were there any issues, either in the primary or in the November election that--like propositions on the ballot--had any particular effect on you? Did people ask you where you stood on them? Did you have any feeling, in other words, there were other things beyond just your running that might have affected the outcome?

HENSON: I am trying to think what the big issues were in those days. The death penalty was a big issue. Welfare was a big issue.

DOUGLASS: But there were not any particular ballot propositions you remember in conjunction with that campaign?

HENSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Then you won very handily against Mr. Locke, 40,572 to 27,781. You must have been euphoric at that point.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What did you have in your mind about arrangements, if you were elected and had to go

to Sacramento?

HENSON: I really didn't have any arrangements. We were going to stay with the law office. I had been told that we would have a lot of time to work in the law office, so we would have a lot of time to practice law. I really didn't make any different arrangements that way. I just had to do what we could as we went along. I arranged with the law office for different financial arrangements. I would have to pay my share of the office expenditure and then whatever was left over I would keep as to what I brought in.

In that day, they only paid \$500 a month. They had a per diem, but that amounted to another maybe \$600 a month. We had a free car and free gas. They gave you an office and so much to operate the office a month. We set up an office. This fellow who did a lot of work in the campaign became the administrative assistant. He had some really great ideas.

DOUGLASS: What was his name?

HENSON: [] Dick Arnold. He is deceased now.

DOUGLASS: Was he from Ventura County?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What had he done down here besides being in your campaign?

HENSON: He was a teacher. The school gave him half-time

off to work in the office.

DOUGLASS: This is the office in the district.

HENSON: District office. At that time we didn't have any administrative assistants up there. I would drive back and forth every week. It got rather grueling because everybody wants to talk to you when you come home. You'd come home on Friday or Thursday afternoon, and everybody wanted to talk to you. And that caused problems with my wife, Nancy. She did not like politics at all. She was not helpful on the campaign. She was a negative force. We eventually were divorced.

DOUGLASS: You didn't try to move them to Sacramento?

HENSON: It was not practical in those days. Children, when they get into high school, want to stay with their friends. There was not enough money to go around for two homes.

DOUGLASS: It was better for them to stay here.

HENSON: It was better for them to stay here. I drove back and forth. This got to be very grueling. Because, real problems at home. Nancy at that time thought that all I was doing up there was partying and having all kinds of affairs. Things got very difficult at home.

DOUGLASS: Did you maintain an apartment up there the whole time you were in the legislature?

HENSON: I stayed in the Elks Club for a long time. That is where a lot of legislators stayed. It was

very inexpensive. That's why we stayed there. It was about six blocks from the capitol, so we could walk back and forth.

DOUGLASS: Did you rent a room?

HENSON: Yes. I rented a room there.

DOUGLASS: And could you get some meals if you wanted?

HENSON: No meals.

DOUGLASS: No meals. Just a room. But there was a group who did that?

HENSON: Quite a group. Maybe about twenty legislators did that.

DOUGLASS: You could take the room when you needed it. Then leave, come back, and rent another room.

HENSON: No. You would keep the same room. It was a ridiculously small amount. Sixty-five dollars a month or something like that.

DOUGLASS: This was a good solution.

HENSON: You just kept the same room the whole time. In those days, Jesse Unruh was the speaker. Things were pretty well organized. It was a very good group of legislators. There was not all that much partisanship involved at that time.

DOUGLASS: Tell about first meeting Unruh. What was your impression of him when you first met him?

HENSON: It was so funny. They kept saying, "Look, you better go up and talk to Unruh. He was behind you." A teamster representative said this. I

said, "All right." I went up there with the teamster representative. So, we met in his office. At that time, he was huge. They were talking about some fellow who was leaving the legislature. They were just pouring it on. I said, "They are sure talking a lot about that fellow." He said, "Yes. It is about ready to make me sick to my stomach. I am about to puke." Those were Unruh's first words. Isn't that something?

DOUGLASS: Those were Unruh's first words to you?

[Laughter] That is your first impression.

HENSON: He asked me about the campaign.

DOUGLASS: Then did he make it clear to you that he had been involved?

HENSON: Yes. He wanted me to win. He had some money he would try to send me now and then, but not much. There are other problems all over the state. He impressed me as being very knowledgeable on campaigns, what you had to do to win the election and so forth.

DOUGLASS: Did he focus on any issues with you as to where you stood? To feel you out.

HENSON: No. They didn't worry about issues. He didn't worry about it.

DOUGLASS: He probably wanted your loyalty if it came to the vote on the speakership?

HENSON: He wanted the vote on the speakership. That's

all he ever asked up in Sacramento. But when you are up there that is all he ever asked. Just vote for him for speaker and then vote for the budget. That's all you had to do.

DOUGLASS: The rest of it he didn't hound you about?

HENSON No.

DOUGLASS: Why don't we go on through with Unruh because he is a focal point. In the years you were in the legislature, what were your views of him as a speaker. And did you have a lot of interaction with him?

HENSON: Not an awful lot. He was very good. He appointed me to a lot of fine committees. He never did say, "I would like to have you vote this one, one way or the other." He had a very bad press and I don't know why. He had a bad appearance, and he said some very stupid things. But I never had any problems with him at all, and he never put any pressure on me to vote one way or the other. I always voted for him for speaker. I voted for the budget. That was all we had to do.

DOUGLASS: You had a lot of freedom?

HENSON: Oh, yes. He figured people voted their districts, the way people felt in their districts and that was about it. I never did quite figure him out. He could be very good sometimes; other times he could be very ornery

with people.

DOUGLASS: I take it that you didn't have that experience?

HENSON: I had no problems with him whatever. It was a very good experience. I enjoyed all the people up there. Things went along fine. As I say, the problems started at home because of the problems with children and with the wife.

DOUGLASS: So you didn't feel you had solid, comfortable support in your background as a base?

HENSON: Yes. Which became a very serious problem. The problems with my wife, Nancy, became very acute. The children started developing behavioral problems. That is why I eventually resigned. I would have won reelection.

DOUGLASS: So you decided to opt out.

HENSON: Better opting it out and try to save the family. [Laughter] It was ridiculous. It didn't solve any problems at all. We eventually got divorced.

DOUGLASS: How many years later did you split up?

HENSON: It was about ten years.

DOUGLASS: Raised the kids, I guess.

HENSON: Yes, raised the kids. Anyway, I thought it was a very good experience. I would have liked to have stayed in there in the legislature. As it turned out, I regret my not staying with it. I enjoyed it and did well with it.

DOUGLASS: Let's talk about those committee assignments you

got. I take it you got pretty much what you were interested in.

HENSON: Yes. In those days, the county was relatively undeveloped. We were undergoing tremendous growth. So you had to be in those things that were going to help the county. I was appointed to the Water Committee and the Committee on Natural Resources, Planning, and Public Works; and the Ways and Means Committee and the Criminal Procedure Committee.

DOUGLASS: You had a natural interest in criminal procedure as a lawyer, I suppose.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: And, also, Public Health [Committee], to cover the whole list. Gordon [H.] Winton [Jr.] was the chairman of that when you went on the Criminal Procedure Committee.

HENSON: Yes, he was. As I look back on that committee, I think they wanted that committee evenly balanced so that nothing passed. Unruh always had that committee stacked so there were always so many votes for law enforcement and always so many votes against law enforcement. Winton was in the middle. I don't think Winton and Unruh got along.

DOUGLASS: No. They didn't, I don't believe. In the sense that Winton had contested him for the speakership.

HENSON: Right.

DOUGLASS: What would Unruh's reasons be for that? Maybe he figured it would be better to have nothing happen than to have one side or the other winning?

HENSON: Right.

DOUGLASS: Now you had [Assemblyman George C.] Deukmejian on that committee.

HENSON: Yes. He was for law enforcement.

DOUGLASS: Where would have you stood in this?

HENSON: I was more or less in the middle, but favoring law enforcement. We also had [Assemblyman A. Phillip] Phil Burton, who was violently anti-law enforcement.

DOUGLASS: That must have been kind of frustrating.

[Laughter]

HENSON: It was a terrible committee. We would have hearings all afternoon, and nothing would pass out. And Burton would always ask for a roll call vote. So we had to vote separately. We never had enough votes to get the bill out of committee.

DOUGLASS: How was Gordon Winton as a chairman?

HENSON: I thought he was very good. I kind of liked him, really.

DOUGLASS: He was the first person whom I interviewed in this project. He was very interesting. That is

a very insightful comment about that committee. Your experience was that in these years that you were there, not much really came out the other end?

HENSON: No. There are some committees set up that way. In those days, the senate had a Committee on Governmental Efficiency and nothing got out of that committee.

DOUGLASS: The cemetery.

HENSON: The cemetery committee.

DOUGLASS: All right. You felt this was Unruh's approach because he made the appointments. Then the Water Committee was chaired by [Assemblyman Carley V.] Porter, who, of course, was such a key person in water. Did you spend quite a bit of time on that? In other words, out of those committees, which do you think you got the most out of or put the most energy into?

HENSON: The Water Committee was pretty much set. It was kind of a conservative committee. They wanted to keep things the way they are. They didn't want any new things to happen either. I suppose the Natural Resources Committee was the committee that was more vital and more interesting and was more of an interest to this county.

So, through that we got parks. For example, the greatest thing I ever did for the

county was to get a state park. I went through those committee hearings and so forth, using influence, and that occurred.

We had other hearings, and [Assemblyman Edwin L.] Z'berg was the chairman. A very delightful man. He had all kinds of problems of his own. But he was a great chairman and did a very good job. That committee went into parks and went into preserving redwoods, all kinds of things like that. That was the most stimulating committee I was on, except for Ways and Means.

DOUGLASS: That came in your second term.

HENSON: Yes, not the first year. But, anyway, that year was great.

DOUGLASS: Did you have any immediate goal? When you were elected, was there something you wanted to go up there and do and accomplish for your district?

HENSON: Not really. I just felt that I had better take care of all the basic needs of the county, road construction, parks, and a state college. We got a state college here and got the land bought. It was all set and then [Governor Edmund G.] Jerry Brown [Jr.] went and sold the property.

DOUGLASS: I want to run through that bill with you in a minute. Was a state college one of your goals?

HENSON: Yes. Parks. State college. Getting the beaches repaired. More or less bread-and-

butter things. Getting roads. We needed highways desperately.

DOUGLASS: What we now call the infrastructure needed to be in place?

HENSON: That's correct. We had a problem with the courts then. We did a good job in consolidating all the municipal and justice courts in one bill.¹

DOUGLASS: So, you were there for overall kinds of things for this county. The bigger picture, it sounds like.

HENSON: More or less just what we could do for the county.

DOUGLASS: You didn't run on some particular [issue]. "I am going to go up and get you X, Y, or Z."

HENSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Why don't we take a minute to go over this freshman class you were in. The listing is about nineteen or twenty people who entered in that class, and it is quite an amazing group of people. Were you aware at that the time you came in that this was an unusual group?

HENSON: Yes. We knew it was a large group.

DOUGLASS: Was this a result of the reapportionment?

1340.

1. A.B. 1731, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: This district was not changed, but it changed the opportunities for others.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: To look at that list, there are a number of outstanding people. Let's just take Deukmejian for one. What was your impression of him?

HENSON: Well, he was a pleasant person. He seemed very honest. He didn't seem overly bright, really. He was pleasant, humble, and hardworking. I enjoyed him.

DOUGLASS: You said he was quiet. Do you think he was taking it all in and not speaking much? Or was that his personality?

HENSON: No. He sounded off. He became a law enforcement man right from the beginning. That was his main thing. He was always for law enforcement.

DOUGLASS: [Assemblyman] Victor [V.] Veysey came in, in that class. I think you were on a committee with him.

HENSON: Yes. I knew him. I became acquainted with him. I liked him. He was a very quiet man. He, more or less, represented an area similar to mine. At least, on farming things, I talked to him. He was good to talk to on farming things. His problems were the same as the farmers had here.

DOUGLASS: [Assemblyman William] Byron Rumford from

Alameda.

HENSON: I think he had been there before.

DOUGLASS: Right, he had. I see. I mistook a split in the listing of terms and registrations, in 1963, for a break in his service. What were your impressions of Rumford?

HENSON: He had been there all along. He was chairman of this Public Health Committee that I was on. We got along. The doctors more or less dominated that committee. That was fine. We respected him. He seemed a very honest, forthright man. He seemed much more conservative than what his bills would represent, such as the Rumford Fair¹ Housing Act. I am not sure that he really thought that was a good idea. It led to his defeat.

DOUGLASS: He sort of got tagged with that.

HENSON: He got tagged with that and lost the election because of that. He was not a rabid type of radical black that maybe some people thought he was. He was a very fine gentleman.

DOUGLASS: And [Assemblyman] John [G.] Veneman.

HENSON: He was from my hometown of Modesto. A farmer. I really never got to know him well.

1. A.B. 1240, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1853.

- DOUGLASS: And [Assemblyman] John [F.] Foran, who was your seatmate, from San Francisco.
- HENSON: Yes. He was far more liberal than I was. He came from a liberal district in San Francisco. We got along fine. We disagreed on bills.
- DOUGLASS: But you also sponsored a number of bills together.
- HENSON: Well, you are sitting right next to him. Everybody wants to have sponsors for their bill.
- DOUGLASS: That was kind of being pleasant. I did note that there were a number of bills where you were the lead person, or he was.
- HENSON: Yes. We did that to get along.
- DOUGLASS: You would put him to the left of you?
- HENSON: Yes. He was a fine gentleman. We had no problems.
- DOUGLASS: So you had a pleasant seatmate. [Assemblyman Anthony C.] Beilenson was elected that year, too.
- HENSON: A very interesting gentleman. He came from kind of an unusual area of Los Angeles. Primarily Jewish people there. He had a lot of forward-looking ideas. He was for eliminating the abortion prohibition. At that time, it was against the law to have an abortion. So, he was sponsoring legislation along those lines. A very honest man. Very fine. I am glad he went

on to congress, and he has done a very good job.

DOUGLASS: You can look at the list. I don't want to belabor it, but [Assemblyman John P.] Quimby was another one.

HENSON: Yes. He was fine. He came here. He was a great emcee in those days. [Assemblyman Phillip L.] Phil Soto was a very fine gentleman. He just had a poor district and could not make it. [Assemblyman Stewart] Hinckley was a very fine man, too. I guess he died in an air crash. He was young and I never got to know him. [Assemblyman] John Moreno. He had some alcoholic problems. He never got reelected. [Assemblyman] Joe [A.] Gonsalves was very fine. I never got to know him well. [Assemblyman Harold E.] Booth. I got to know him pretty well. He represented an area similar to Ventura County in those days.

DOUGLASS: He represented all those northern counties.

HENSON: It was a Republican area primarily, and he just got defeated by that. [Assemblyman William E.] Dannemeyer is interesting. He was a Democratic man and became a Republican. [Assemblyman Leo J.] Ryan was interesting, too. We became good friends with him. We shared similar offices. [Assemblyman Richard J.] Donovan was a friend of mine. He committed suicide. Did you know

DOUGLASS: No. What a shame.

HENSON: He became a judge. And I don't know why he did that. He committed suicide shortly after he left.

DOUGLASS: This is a sizable group. It must have been fun to have so many people new at it with you.

HENSON: Oh, yes.

DOUGLASS: Was there anybody, though, who particularly helped you? Maybe somebody who had probably been there before in the assembly.

HENSON: There was a fellow from Sacramento. [Assemblyman Walter W.] Walt Powers. He had come from Escalon. Imagine the little town of Escalon had two assemblymen.

DOUGLASS: Yes. How did that happen?

HENSON: I don't know. He was from Sacramento at that time. Powers was very helpful to me.

DOUGLASS: How long had he been in the legislature?

HENSON: He had just gotten there, too. He was new also. He was from Sacramento and, in fact, he was older than I was.

DOUGLASS: He was helpful. Was there anybody who had been there before whom you particularly went to or talked to?

HENSON: No. Did it yourself. Well, Z'berg became a friend of mine. He was head of the Natural Resources Committee, and we got to be friends

because we went off on these interim hearings together.

DOUGLASS: I will ask you about partisanship, but I think you may have answered this. How partisan did the assembly seem to you?

HENSON: It seemed a little bit more partisan, ordinarily, because people were all new. And the new people tended to be more partisan. We thought that if Unruh was sponsoring a bill, it was a Democratic position and we should do that.

DOUGLASS: You hung together on the things that were important.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: But then it is a question of how many things you were asked to do that on.

HENSON: Right. Of course, in those days, we still had that battle with CDC. So we didn't know what the Democratic position was.

DOUGLASS: Did you pretty much go along with what Unruh was saying? If there came a vote on partisan issues, would it be the speaker who was calling it?

HENSON: Yes. There was a majority leader by the name of [Assemblyman Jerome R.] Waldie. We had caucuses every week and talked over these things.

DOUGLASS: How was he as a caucus chairman?

HENSON: Oh, an excellent man. A very pleasant man. Very good. I think he is still up there. He is

a very refreshing person.

DOUGLASS: Did you enjoy participating in the caucus?

HENSON: Yes. It was very good.

DOUGLASS: That is where the action was.

HENSON: That's where the action was. That's where people could talk. That is where Unruh let his hair down and talked about things, and Waldie was the same way.

DOUGLASS: Were there any other people who emerged in your mind out of those caucuses? Besides Unruh and Waldie.

HENSON: Burton always talked a lot. He represented a particular, extreme view. A liberal view.

DOUGLASS: Was he much more liberal than most of people in the caucus?

HENSON: Well, he was San Francisco, which is kind of a liberal area anyway. Yes. He was more liberal than most people. He talked a lot.

DOUGLASS: I gather he was a good speaker. OK. If you were to summarize it, though, what would say the relationship between those who were Democrats and Republicans were at that time?

HENSON: As time went on, they became less partisan. They became personal friends with people. They tried to help each other out in their districts. If some Republican had some bill which would help him in a district, the Democrats--his

friends--would help him out. Partisanship became less and less.

DOUGLASS: And so, even if you might disagree on an issue, what were the social relations among people?

HENSON: No problem. They did not take issues into consideration. Political issues never interfered with social friendship. We had many free lunches and cocktail parties and dinners. Everybody talked with each other.

DOUGLASS: Where would the dinners be?

HENSON: We had them every night of the week just about. Some association would come and throw a dinner.

DOUGLASS: Where would they have them?

HENSON: They had a lot of them at the El Mirador [Hotel]. They had them at some other places. At some club in town. Some kind of a country club area. We had a free lunch every Wednesday at the Mirador. There was a free lunch every Thursday also at the Mirador. Different lobbyists would throw lunches for the committees at the hotels.

DOUGLASS: Now the ones you spoke of were for everybody in the legislature?

HENSON: Yes. Everybody could go.

DOUGLASS: Did you get a pitch at those at all? Did they have a program to pitch? No arm-twisting?

HENSON: No. Nothing. They just talked. The members never let social positions interfere with their

personal relationships. In other words, an extreme liberal and extreme conservative would go out and have a drink together.

DOUGLASS: Were those an opportunity for you to talk to other legislators? Those lunches. Even say, senators . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

DOUGLASS: What did you feel you got out of those, other than a pleasant meal?

HENSON: It was a chance for interrelationships with other members, which was very helpful. In the backroom of the assembly, there was a coffee shop that was open just to legislators. We got free doughnuts and coffee, and we could sit there and talk to other people about bills and so forth.

DOUGLASS: In terms of your office, how much space and help did you have that first session you were there?

HENSON: I just had a secretary. I had a nice room and a secretary and that was all.

DOUGLASS: And the rest was up to you?

HENSON: Well, there was nothing else to do. You had a home office with room for one representative.

DOUGLASS: I thought we might go over the bills. That first session. I hope you will certainly point out the ones you thought were significant. I did want to ask an opening question, because you had so many bills on contractors and that went through the next session, too. Was there a particular problem you were trying to get at, in terms of contracting?

HENSON: Yes. This county had undergone a lot of construction of housing. The big subdivisions, in areas like Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley,

Camarillo. Fast-growing areas. A lot of problems had arisen. Cracked slabs, I remember, in the Thousand Oaks area. Everybody was mad and thought something should be done about this.

A lot of construction work was done, and the owner would pay the contractor. He would not pay the material men, and people would end up with a big lien on their place. There were a lot of fly-by-night contractors in the area at that time. They would operate as a contractor without a license. It was a big thing in the county at that time to try to clean up the construction industry.

The big subdivisions were just terrible. They would be putting in forty or fifty homes. Maybe more. Once somebody went sour on the job, it would just ruin the whole thing, causing all kinds of problems.

DOUGLASS: Was your approach to this to amend the Business and Professions Code to tighten up the situation?

HENSON: Yes. To tighten up. To require a contractor's bond on, make the contractor post a bond that people could sue on and collect from it in order to eliminate fly-by-nights who could not put up

the thousand-dollar bond.¹

DOUGLASS: I remember that. Although the first bill, on this list for '63 that I ran into, A.B. 775, actually a bill with Beilenson, had to do with an exemption of an owner of a property who built when not for sale and not more than three units and one of these units was to be his domicile. That seemed to me more liberalizing.² But the other bills did address contractors, like one you did with Foran, A.B. 1789, you said that the contractors must file a thousand-dollar bond.³ This was to get them to back up what they had done.

HENSON: Yes. To try to eliminate irresponsible people. In fact, the contractors' association actually prepared that bill, and I sponsored it.

DOUGLASS: They weren't fighting you.

HENSON: No. Nobody fought the bill.

DOUGLASS: They wanted the bad apples [out].

HENSON: They wanted them out. In fact, their association more or less came up with that bill.

DOUGLASS: To go ahead to '65, there is A.B. 860, where you said an application for the original

 Carried by Henson and Foran.
 1. A.B. 1786, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1972.
 2. A.B. 775, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1957.
 3. A.B. 1789, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1972.

contractor's license or reactivation, one must
show financial solvency.¹

HENSON: Yes. This is all getting at the same thing.

DOUGLASS: Well, that explains it. I sure noticed all
those contractor's bills. [Laughter]

HENSON: It was a big problem in those days.

DOUGLASS: It was. We were in a period of rapid
development.

HENSON: Tremendously. This county just doubled its size
in a short time.

DOUGLASS: People are not very happy when the houses are
not put together correctly.

I already asked you about Foran. There was
certainly something going on about the title of
the director of weights and measures. That was
all through here. It had to do with the county
sealer being called the director of weights and
measures. This all had to do with titles, I
believe. Cleanup legislation?

HENSON: I think so. There was not anything there.

DOUGLASS: One other that did catch my attention was in
criminal law. A.B. 2913, in which you amended
the penal code to delete the proviso that if one
receives stolen property from someone under

1. A.B. 860, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 636.

eighteen, not at a fixed place of business, that it was proposed to be stolen.¹ In other words, you deleted that. That apparently had been the presumption in the law which I thought was kind of interesting. Does that ring a bell with you at all?

HENSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Apparently if you accepted something from a youth under eighteen years, if it was out in front of their house or not a place where they were employed in a business, you were in a bad way if you didn't presume it was stolen.

HENSON: I think that may have been to conform with some judicial decisions. It was not a big item.

DOUGLASS: Let's talk about the Oxnard Harbor District and the expansion of the Port Hueneme Harbor. You had Assembly Joint Resolution 34 on that.² I didn't pick up any bills on that later. Perhaps you could speak to that.

HENSON: That was directed to the federal government to order a feasibility study on Port Hueneme Harbor to expand it. This was a great economic benefit to the county of Ventura to have a deepwater

1. A.B. 2913, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1605.
2. A.J.R. 34, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., r. ch.

port and to have it expanded. Apparently, this feasibility study was necessary before anything could be done.

DOUGLASS: Let me get this clear for background. There was an Oxnard Harbor District. And then there is a Port Hueneme Harbor.

HENSON: It is all the same.

DOUGLASS: So I'd say that all in one word.

HENSON: Yes. Port Hueneme Harbor is part of the Oxnard Harbor District. So, it was important to get that expanded. You had to get some federal feasibility study before you could expand it. At that time, [President John F.] Kennedy was in the White House, and Unruh was his man in California. If you wanted to get anything done, you'd go through Unruh. They had a remarkable machinery on that type of thing. I think that they did authorize a feasibility study, and it has since been greatly expanded.

DOUGLASS: Did you go to Unruh on this before you even introduced this resolution?

HENSON: No. I just introduced this resolution.

DOUGLASS: Then what happened?

HENSON: It was sent back to Washington. In fact, the governor, Pat Brown was for it, too. Because at that time he needed some vote on that withholding tax. I said, "OK. I'll vote for

it." But my vote came up the forty-first vote. I said, "Well, if you support that feasibility study, I will vote for this."

DOUGLASS: This is for state withholding, I assume.

HENSON: Yes. Which was a very critical item in those days. It was a sensitive item. Brown also supported it.

DOUGLASS: Did you ever specifically talk to Unruh about it? Were the skids greased already?

HENSON: Yes. More or less.

DOUGLASS: They did a feasibility study. How long did it take?

HENSON: I don't know whatever happened to it. It has expanded greatly and is prospering now.

DOUGLASS: So, during the time you were in the legislature, you are not quite sure how that had looped. Maybe it had not looped. It takes so long.

HENSON: It takes a long time to get it going.

DOUGLASS: But that would be the fundamental first move?

HENSON: Right. They had a Democratic organization at that time--at least Kennedy did--if you had done something like this in the state, they would take care of you.

DOUGLASS: If you had worked in their cause?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Just a couple of other resolutions. One interested me. You introduced Assembly Joint Resolution 83 to establish a federal water

pollution control research facility in California.¹ Was that caused by some interest you had in water pollution out here in your harbor?

HENSON: We had a problem of underground water pollution here. Groundwater. We still have a terrible problem. It has never been solved.

DOUGLASS: Did that facility ever get established?

HENSON: I don't think so.

DOUGLASS: That's too bad. You were ahead of your time.
[Laughter]

HENSON: They have done nothing about the underground pollution in this county. Saltwater intrusion. That is our problem.

DOUGLASS: It is basic to life. And one other. You, Foran, and [Assemblyman Frank P.] Belotti had Assembly Concurrent Resolution 43 with regard to apprenticeships in secondary schools.² Was there some interest you had in high school youngsters being able to do apprentice work?

HENSON: I ran on a platform that we should have more trade education in schools. More vocational opportunities.

1. A.J.R. 29, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., r. ch. 83.
2. A.C.R. 43, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., r. ch. 168.

DOUGLASS: I was not able to track any bills, follow-ups. Did that come to anything? The apprenticeship?

HENSON: I don't know.

DOUGLASS: That represented a stand you had. Unless you spotted any bills you had in the '63 session . . .

HENSON: We had the state college bill, didn't we? Was that later?

DOUGLASS: That came in the next session. It is the first bill in '65. I tried to pick up general themes. Some of it looks like county housekeeping type of things.

HENSON: I did have a bill that provided that in a death penalty case, you would have the choice between ordinary life, death, and life without possibility of parole. I guess you didn't pick that up, did you?

DOUGLASS: No. I didn't.

HENSON: It passed in the assembly. It was defeated in the senate.

DOUGLASS: These are bills that became law. But talk about that. What was your reason for doing that? And how was it received?

HENSON: It was really bad at that time. I had represented a person who went to the gas chamber and got interested in the whole thing. At that time, if you got life, you were eligible for parole in seven years. And this was all told to

the jury. They said, "Life, my god, does not mean anything. Seven years. Let's give him the death penalty." So, I said that they ought to have a third choice. Life without possibility of parole.

DOUGLASS: Which it is now.

HENSON: Yes. I was ahead of my time. [Laughter]

DOUGLASS: What was your feeling about the death penalty at that time?

HENSON: At that time, I was against it.

DOUGLASS: You were in support of Brown's position.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: You thought this would be a viable option for a jury.

HENSON: People looked at it in different ways. Some people thought it might result in less death penalties. In fact, this what the senate committee thought. This would result in less death penalties because they would always give people life without parole.

DOUGLASS: That probably went to the Criminal Procedure Committee in the assembly.

HENSON: Yes. It passed and it passed the assembly. It went to the senate committee and was killed there.

DOUGLASS: It was passed by the assembly. It went quite a ways. That went to the senate Judiciary Committee, I suppose.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: That's where interesting things can happen to bills.

HENSON: That's where it went down the tubes.

DOUGLASS: Did you go up there and speak to it?

HENSON: Oh, sure.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember that session?

HENSON: Yes. It was a very bad session. It seemed like they had already met and decided this was going down the tubes. There was not any hearing or anything. And [Assemblyman Donald L.] Grunsky was kind of a caustic man. He just said, "It was going, in effect, do away with the death penalty. So, it is going down."

DOUGLASS: Was he chairing the committee?

HENSON: He was chairing the committee. It was a very bad committee. Grunsky was the boss and he said that it was going down the tubes for interim study, and that was it. Just like that.

DOUGLASS: I should have asked you. Do you have any of your files? Where are your files?

HENSON: I have them up in the garage somewhere. I kept some of them here.

DOUGLASS: The state archives is very interested in collecting papers, if you are interested. That is part of what goes with this project. If you are interested, that certainly is a possibility.

If you happen to find that bill number, it would be nice to cite that. Do you think that was in the first two years? Or do you think it was in that second [two years]?

HENSON: I know it was the first two years.

DOUGLASS: Well, that must have gotten you some attention.

HENSON: Yes. It was interesting.

DOUGLASS: Well, anything else out of that first session in '63?

HENSON: I don't think so.

DOUGLASS: Let me ask you about '64. You were a member of the Joint Interim Committee on Tidelands, chaired by Unruh. How did you happen to get appointed to that?

HENSON: I don't know. Or else I was willing to serve on it because I might have thought it would affect our area. Tidelands oil. At that time, I was interested in seeing if we could get some tidelands oil money for the county. But that committee was only concerned with solving the Long Beach problem. Totally consumed with that. Unruh was the chairman of that. It was at the behest of some Long Beach paper down there.

DOUGLASS: A Long Beach paper had caused this to be quite a scene.

HENSON: They supported Unruh when Unruh ran against [Governor Ronald] Reagan as a result of it. Unruh got the thing solved. Then the editor of

that paper endorsed Unruh. It is interesting.

[Laughter]

DOUGLASS: You must have sat through a lot of meetings?

HENSON: Yes. A very involved thing.

DOUGLASS: It had to do with how much Long Beach got and how much the state got.

HENSON: Yes. It was a delicate problem. It was too tough for the legislator who lived there. I think Deukmejian was on the committee and [Assemblyman Joseph M.] Kennick was also on the committee. It was too delicate for them to deal with because everybody was fighting everybody else in the district.

DOUGLASS: So you had little chance to get attention for your position. [Laughter] Well, maybe it was a learning experience. Let's go to your second contest. You were not contested in the primary. How do you account for that?

HENSON: Well, I really had done a good job. I hate to admit. I had a lot of publicity. I covered the ground pretty well. I put out a monthly newsletter. The CDC wanted to endorse me, so I don't think they could have had anybody. CDC.

This is an interesting story. California Democratic Clubs. They said, "We are going to endorse you this time." I said, "Oh no, you are not." [Laughter] I don't want to be endorsed by that organization. I don't want to be

considered. I just don't want to get involved in it at all. And that organization then put out a news release saying that I had been refused an endorsement. Isn't that awful? I was so mad at them.

DOUGLASS: Who were the leaders of that group down here? Do you remember anybody?

HENSON: It was not anybody in this county. It was the state organization. I don't know who really was in it. [State Controller] Alan [D.] Cranston was deeply involved in that organization. We always got along with him very well, too. A fine gentleman.

DOUGLASS: You always got along with Cranston?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: I did want to ask you quite a bit about CDC. To get specific about this endorsement business, it was in '63 that Unruh got his bill passed on truth in endorsements. This required them to put a disclaimer on their endorsement to say this was unofficial.

HENSON: Right. I am not sure what year it was.

DOUGLASS: That was '63. If they had endorsed you, that would have, at least, had to go on. It is kind of interesting because it was a victory for Unruh.

HENSON: I didn't want to be involved with them at all. Because in this county, it was not helpful at

all.

DOUGLASS: I understand. Their power was reduced by that fact that they would have to put the disclaimer on, also. The CDC's power. Do you remember Unruh's bill?

HENSON: Oh, sure. Oh, yes.

DOUGLASS: That was quite a victory.

HENSON: Yes. He did say that he wanted everybody to be on that in the assembly.

DOUGLASS: So, in the caucus you got the pitch?

HENSON: Yes. I was for it, anyway.

DOUGLASS: Was there any division in the caucus about that?

HENSON: I think there may have been. There were some people who just didn't want to vote for it.

DOUGLASS: All right. In the general election, the contestant from the Republican side was Jacob W. Spatz. Who was he?

HENSON: A very bad candidate.

DOUGLASS: Why did he run?

HENSON: I don't know. He was one of these guys who had a big mouth. He liked to do things.

DOUGLASS: What did he like to do for a living?

HENSON: He had some business. He was from the Simi Valley area. He had some stationery store or something like that. He had been active in the Republican party.

DOUGLASS: What was the nature of the campaign?

HENSON: It really was not much. He really didn't get much of a Republican support, either. I don't think the statewide organization supported him either, he was such a bad candidate.

DOUGLASS: How much effort did you have to put into it?

HENSON: You always have to run hard no matter what it is. You have to run hard even if nobody is running against you, so you have to put up a pretty good campaign.

DOUGLASS: You would have to go through the same syndrome of going through public appearances.

HENSON: Oh, sure. Yes.

DOUGLASS: Do you have any recollection of what those campaigns cost?

HENSON: Yes. About ten thousand dollars.

DOUGLASS: Again. The next one. That is not bad.

HENSON: I don't know what they spend it on these days. I really can't imagine.

DOUGLASS: I guess television is very expensive.

HENSON: But newspaper ads are not that expensive.

DOUGLASS: Did you have a lot of volunteer help?

HENSON: Not really that time because it didn't look like much of a contest.

DOUGLASS: You didn't rally the troops?

HENSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Did you ever do much door-to-door campaigning?

HENSON: I never did. I could not get the courage to do it.

DOUGLASS: I suppose if it had been a real dogfight you might have thought about that? Or didn't you think that was a useful expenditure of your time?

HENSON: I know it was a useful expenditure. I just could not do it.

DOUGLASS: That's understandable. [Laughter] So, Spatz was just one of those people out there who wanted to run?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: I read that you were reelected with the largest vote that any candidate had received in Ventura County up to that point: 64,643 votes. Beating him by over double what he got, 30,636. Again, you came off an election quite triumphantly. That must have felt good.

HENSON: That was good.

DOUGLASS: Your second session, as you entered the assembly, you had the same committees, except you were no longer on Criminal Procedure and you were now vice chairman of Ways and Means, with [Assemblyman] Robert [W.] Crown as chairman. How did you get appointed to Ways and Means?

HENSON: I wanted to. I wanted to get where the money was. I wanted to get more money for the county.

DOUGLASS: Did you ask Unruh for that?

HENSON: I asked for that.

DOUGLASS: And what did he say?

HENSON: He said, "Fine."

DOUGLASS: To include being vice chairman?

HENSON: I didn't put that in there. I just wanted to be on the committee.

DOUGLASS: So he responded very positively.

HENSON: Yes. Very good.

DOUGLASS: Talk a little bit about being on that committee. It is such a key committee.

HENSON: It is a very key committee for money. That is the big thing. Money is what makes projects go in the county. I was interested in parks, highways, and all that sort of thing. They have a Legislative Analyst. The Legislative Analyst would go through the budget and he'd point out things that could be eliminated. Then we'd have hearings and we'd take up those items. We would have a lot of subcommittee hearings. Ways and Means is a very active committee, a big committee, with around twenty-one members.

DOUGLASS: What subcommittees were you on?

HENSON: I don't remember. I tried to get on these committees that would help with the county. The members of the Ways and Means Committee would come up before the legislature started and have those committee hearings. It was very interesting to see a lot of projects that could have been eliminated.

For example, there was some kind of a port district up in Eureka. Every time, the Legislative Analyst would say this is just a waste of money. The assemblyman from there, Mr. Belotti, would come up and say, "Oh, this is my cousin who is on the port district there, along with my friends and so forth. I can't eliminate those jobs because they are all my political supporters." So they could not say, "That's it, Frank. Too bad." So, we went through a lot of those things. Sometimes we would eliminate quite a bit of the expenditure.

DOUGLASS: What kind of pressures were on you? You were a key decision maker. Were you lobbied heavily?

HENSON: I don't think we were too much. The daily routine up there is that you got in the office early. The minute the door opened at nine o'clock, somebody was there to see you. You were talking to people up until the time you went into the session about 10:30 [A.M.]

DOUGLASS: Was that particularly in conjunction with Ways and Means?

HENSON: I don't think it was.

DOUGLASS: It was just in general, you are saying.

HENSON: Yes. I don't think Ways and Means was all that much. The small subcommittees, the people who spoke before the committee would go into it in much more detail.

much more detail.

DOUGLASS: Did the committee tend to accept the subcommittee recommendations?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: The real action would be in the subcommittees.

HENSON: Yes. The full committee would accept whatever the subcommittee did.

DOUGLASS: It was a division of labor then?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: You don't particularly remember what phases you worked on specifically?

HENSON: I worked on the [California] Highway Patrol budget and the Department of Water Resources.

DOUGLASS: Things that fit into your background.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember any big decisions that were made?

HENSON: I don't.

DOUGLASS: How was Robert Crown as a chairman?

HENSON: It is hard to say. He would not control the committee as much as I would have liked him to do. He was rather informal and conducted things rather informally. It was just kind of loose.

DOUGLASS: You felt it wasn't as efficient as it might be?

HENSON: True. He was a fine gentleman, but he was not hard-type of driving force you would like to see as committee chairman.

DOUGLASS: I suppose, too, a committee like that really has to turn the work out.

HENSON: Oh, yes. There are a lot of bills to take on. He was late and did not move things along as well. I don't know why they put him on that committee really.

DOUGLASS: He was very close to Unruh.

HENSON: He was, but I really don't know why they put me on that committee.

DOUGLASS: Why don't we go to one of the big bills you certainly carried. That was A.B. 13 to amend the Education Code for a state college in Ventura.¹ This really is an intriguing question. I gathered you tried to get it on the record that the legislature was standing behind the notion of having a state college there. And, if, indeed, certain other things happened, there would be access to the bond act proceeds of 1964. March up to carrying that bill and what happened, in your recollection.

HENSON: We had had it in before. I think it went in the first session. It was referred to interim study. We lobbied.

DOUGLASS: To the Education Committee?

HENSON: To the Education Committee. To some

1. A.B. 13, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1241.

Coordinating Council on Higher Education. It was very important. We lobbied and lobbied, and lobbied. And it was finally approved by everybody.

DOUGLASS: By the coordinating council?

HENSON: Yes. And by the legislature. So, it was all set. That is what I was trying to say early. They even bought two or three hundred acres in this county. A beautiful location, right in the middle of the county.

DOUGLASS: Now did the state buy that?

HENSON: Yes. It would have been perfect for a state college. During Jerry Brown's regime, they up and sold it.

DOUGLASS: They sold the site.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Was it still in the master plan?

HENSON: As far as I know. Of course, I will admit that I was out of it. I don't know what went on behind the scenes. I think our state senator at the time, [Senator] Omer [L.] Rains, tried to stop it. They just went ahead and sold that property, which would have been a perfect location for a state college. Now they are still working to get some kind of a state college in the county. It really is kind of ridiculous after all that work was done.

DOUGLASS: Let me go back through this again. The time

your first attempt would have been made was close to the time of the passage of the Donahoe¹ Act, the master plan for higher education. That generated a lot of juggling and sparring for sites. And [Senator] Walter [W.] Stiern got his through for Bakersfield State [College]. I interviewed him and remember him talking about how many people were out trying to get a state college, and how difficult it was to get one to the point where it was funded. That was the big challenge.

He mentioned that [Senator] George Miller [Jr.] wanted one in Contra Costa [County]. That, indeed, Senator John [J.] Hollister [Jr.] wanted one in Ventura County. I wonder who you worked with on this bill? You must have had a compatriot in the senate.

HENSON: I don't think it was Hollister. I know Lagomarsino, we worked with him on it.

DOUGLASS: From the Ventura district.

HENSON: Yes. I think we worked with Stiern on it.

DOUGLASS: Now the Donahoe Act did not refer to a college

 1. The Donahoe Higher Education Act, S.B. 33, 1961 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 391. Established a master plan for higher education in California, defining the responsibilities and interfacing of the state colleges, the University of California, and the community colleges.

in Ventura, but it did refer to the fact that there would be this 358 percent increase in students who would be going to state colleges. I think they specifically said two, one in Alameda County and one in Orange [County]. Other than that, it was unspecific about it. But there was the need. The state had a need for this tremendous increase. So, then I suppose it was up to each area to argue its case.

HENSON: I think so. I know I appeared before that coordinating council and the state college board and all kinds of groups like that. I know they purchased land in the county in the Somis area.

DOUGLASS: Now did that happen after you were out of the legislature?

HENSON: Yes. After I left.

DOUGLASS: OK. This bill passed the legislature. You continued, or maybe simultaneously you had argued the case before the coordinating council?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: So you felt that it was on its way?

HENSON: Yes. It was set.

DOUGLASS: How much later do you think the site was purchased?

HENSON: I am not sure.

DOUGLASS: Can you specify some of the towns or where that

land was near?

HENSON: It was near Somis. It was part of the Berylwood Investment Company, a large company, who I think maybe sold it with the purpose of building around it, eventually, themselves. It was a marvelous location. Right in the center of the county, near a small town.

DOUGLASS: So, they probably sold it pretty reasonably, being able to develop around it. Which makes sense.

HENSON: It was a perfect location. It was right in the middle of the county.

DOUGLASS: Your feeling is that must have been held by the state for some time because Brown didn't go into office until 1975. Do you have any feeling when during his term they sold it?

HENSON: It was during his second term.

DOUGLASS: By now you feel it is relative. You don't have that burning feeling about it now?

HENSON: I don't. I think of all the work we went through to do it, and to have somebody like Jerry Brown just flippantly say, "It is not needed." It depresses me.

DOUGLASS: Thinking of what was near you, the nearest state college was [California Polytechnic College] San Luis Obispo.

HENSON: And [California State College] Northridge.

DOUGLASS: I am counting up the coast to see what is there.

HENSON: Santa Barbara has the UC [University of California, Santa Barbara] campus. The county needs one, really. Now they are trying to get some kind of a learning center. The colleges and the universities are always fighting among each other. It is kind of a jurisdictional thing.

DOUGLASS: You mean the junior colleges?

HENSON: No. The statewide college system [California State University] and the university system [University of California].

DOUGLASS: Yes. That is an old story. [Laughter]

HENSON: Isn't that something.

DOUGLASS: You weren't on Education, so you didn't see those contests they typically had for turf.

HENSON: They all wanted money.

DOUGLASS: Anything else about the Ventura state college possibility?

HENSON: No. I thought it was all set. It would have been a great thing.

DOUGLASS: When you left office, you still thought it was in good shape. You thought that you had achieved what you had set out to do?

HENSON: Yes. Right.

DOUGLASS: Well, looking at those bills for '65, you did have a bill A.B. 548, which stated the court could enforce child support for illegitimate as

in the same fashion as for legitimate children.¹

HENSON: That was not a big item.

DOUGLASS: Again, more contractors. I think we have covered that. You did carry the bill which consolidated the municipal and justice courts in Ventura County.²

HENSON: Yes. That was a big project. At that time, we had justice courts all over the county. Two or three municipal courts. I did most of the work on that, trying to get together.

DOUGLASS: That was happening all over the state at various times. Weren't people trying to phase out justice courts?

HENSON: I don't think the drive was really on at that time. That was later.

DOUGLASS: I gather this was a fair achievement.

HENSON: A fair achievement. I think.

DOUGLASS: Then you got seven judges, in all, for Ventura County.

HENSON: Yes. Under one umbrella.

DOUGLASS: Was there any particular impetus for doing that?

HENSON: No. I was interested in that.

DOUGLASS: Your experience had led you to that.

HENSON: Right.

1. A.B. 548, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 422.
2. A.B. 1731, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1761.

DOUGLASS: In terms of parks and recreation, I was interested in a bill you carried which allowed for special zone taxes for facilities and programs for specific purposes within a park district. I thought that was pretty interesting. Does that ring a bell? [A.B.] 3025.¹ You established a procedure for the establishment of a zone. In other words, they could tax in order to set up particular programs. I wondered if there were something in your district that had caused you to want that to happen?

HENSON: I don't remember any controversy involved.

DOUGLASS: Then the next bill, just to go down the list, in terms of zoning, that the zoning exemption was not applicable if a school district was to erect nonclassroom facilities.²

HENSON: Yes. The local planning commission wanted that.

DOUGLASS: Were there any bills that you thought were important? You are the best judge of . . .

HENSON: The big item then was to get the state park at Point Magu. That was the big one.³

DOUGLASS: You carried that as a resolution.

1. A.B. 3025, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1194.
2. A.B. 3299, 1965 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1538.
3. A.C.R. 57, 1966 First Ex. Sess., Cal. Stat., r. ch. 105.

HENSON: Yes. But it was a question of fighting behind the scenes to get the appropriations to buy it. The owner of the property was a big man in the county who did not want it to be bought. It went round and round, and finally the state did approve it and it was bought.

DOUGLASS: That was actually in '66. Could you flesh that story out a little more. Had the idea of a state park there been around for some time?

HENSON: Yes. But on a smaller scale. They had a bond issue coming up for purchasing park and recreational facilities. I am not sure what year it was. The state Department of Recreation thought that this would be a good thing. It was under one ownership. So, you get the whole chunk of property from one owner. No problems. If you are going to have condemnation, you are just going to have one lawsuit.

DOUGLASS: Who was the owner? Do you recall?

HENSON: A fellow named Broom.

DOUGLASS: B-R-O-O-M?

HENSON: [] Jack Broom. He was an old-time county pioneer, who was vehemently against it.

DOUGLASS: Against just the idea of a state park?

HENSON: Against the taking of his property.

DOUGLASS: You went through condemnation?

HENSON: The state went through condemnation. And it was

established.

DOUGLASS: Beyond this resolution, were there then bills passed after you out of the legislature that were a follow through on this? Or was this simply a matter of going ahead and using state bond money to purchase the land?

HENSON: Yes. The second. Using state bond money.

DOUGLASS: You must have been proud of that.

HENSON: Yes. That was good accomplishment.

DOUGLASS: Sometimes that is quite difficult to achieve.

HENSON: Yes. You had to work hard to achieve it.

DOUGLASS: So, this would have been a larger park than anyone had envisioned?

HENSON: Several hundred [acres].

DOUGLASS: You did coauthor a water project bill with Senator James [A.] Cobey.¹ Porter, Cobey, and you were on that bill with regard to state water projects. That was in '66. You were on his committee, of course, but how about Cobey? Did you work with him?

HENSON: I don't recall anything about that. We did try to get some money for this salt water intrusion problem. I thought we did get some.

DOUGLASS: That might have been in that bill.

1. A.B. 12, 1966 First Ex. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 27.

HENSON: It may have been. Yes, to get some money to try to do something with it, but I don't think anything ever happened.

DOUGLASS: What did you think you did get out of being on that Water Committee? As you walked away from the legislature? Were you frustrated?

HENSON: No. It was a great learning experience. Carley Porter was a very, very brilliant man. He had done a great job of getting the water from northern California to southern California.

DOUGLASS: Yes. His name is on the big bill.

HENSON: Yes. The Burns-Porter [Water Bonds] Act.¹
That's right. So, we learned about all the problems involved there. The idea that Porter didn't want anything to disturb that plan.

DOUGLASS: You mean the north-south . . .

HENSON: Well, the committee was loaded with southern California people. So, nothing would happen. There were a lot of internal problems about water, particularly in this county.

You know, we have that condor refuge up in the foothills. The condors happen to be right where there is a necessity for a big water project. The United Water Conservation District

1. California Water Resources Development Bond Act, S.B. 1106, 1959 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1762.

of Ventura County wanted to build a dam on the Sespe River. It happened to be right in the middle of the condor preserve.

This would have been an immense economic benefit to Ventura County to do that. But they were frustrated by the Department of Interior because we had to save the condors. I was really for the project. "We will move the condors. Put them somewhere else. Or put them in captivity." "Oh, we can't do that." And they finally did. They finally put all the condors in captivity.

DOUGLASS: Finally, meaning not so long ago.

HENSON: Right. Now they are bringing up South American condors to put them in the condor refuge. It is kind of silly.

DOUGLASS: So the refuge was sustained.

HENSON: Yes. Now we have floods periodically that do a lot of damage in the country.

DOUGLASS: That's right. You still get flooding up there. All right. I wanted to ask you about Pat Brown. What were your relationships with Brown? Did you deal with him at all?

HENSON: Right. He had a lot of great qualities. Toward the end, he was promising everybody everything. He seemed to have a way of doing that. Promising too many things to people. He had

taken a more liberal course of things which was detrimental to this county. I got along with him fine. Of course, he was more or less aligned with the CDC.

I got along with people in his office. Although, once again, we had the problem of welfare. His welfare director seemed to be extremely unpopular by providing more welfare instead of less welfare, which the people of this county favored.

It is really kind of funny. I kind of enjoyed him personally, but he kind of had a strange way of doing things. He used to call me up sometimes: "Hey, how is that liberal county of Ventura doing?" I said, "It is not liberal, governor." I really don't know. He was a little bit too far to left for this county.

DOUGLASS: Sometimes that put you in a difficult position?

HENSON: Difficult position. Right.

DOUGLASS: Would he call and talk to you about anything?

HENSON: Yes. He would. He would call, periodically, and talk about voting for a certain bill that he had in mind. I remember when he thought Unruh was going to run against him, he called me down to his office and showed me the opinion polls he had and that he was going to win. We tried to talk to him about the condor preserve. He was for the condors, I think.

for the condors, I think.

A pleasant man. If he would have steered a more conservative course, I think he would have been all right. He got to be identified as a liberal, and he proclaimed himself a liberal. Against the death penalty. He used to commute those death penalties to life. Just a little bit too far to the left. At least, this county was not with him.

DOUGLASS: His office was open to you, I gather, if you wanted to talk to him?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: He was visible? He was out?

HENSON: Yes. He was very visible. He would meet you and talk to you.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

DOUGLASS: Did you find that in the first term you were in the legislature it was easier for you to deal with the Brown phenomenon than, say, the second? Did you see a change?

HENSON: Yes. There was a change. I think because Unruh and Brown got into it--I don't know what their problem was--but we constantly got in the squeeze between Unruh and Brown. It made it very difficult sometimes.

DOUGLASS: The tension?

HENSON: There was a lot of tension. Obviously, there was tension between Brown and Unruh. Unruh felt that Brown and the senate were ganging up on the assembly. Then he would take a position, and he would just hold tight and nothing would move for several days. There was no room for compromise at all.

If I had any criticism of Unruh, it would be that he became very stubborn at times on these sort of things. He felt Brown was fooling around behind the scenes and trying to undermine him. I don't know what Brown felt about Unruh. He never did say. I don't think Unruh liked Brown very well, just because they were rivals. Unruh wanted to run for governor.

I will never forget the last conversation I ever had with Brown was in the spring of 1966.

He appointed me judge. I was starting to have problems at home. Terrible problems at home with Nancy. I said I had better become a judge. I talked to Unruh about it and he said, "Fine." "I hate to leave you, but here is a solution." Not what I wanted to do. I talked to Brown. He said he would appoint me.

Then there got to be a problem. I will never forget Brown saying, "The main thing you want to do is to get Ronald Reagan nominated by the Republicans. Because he is going to be the easiest man to beat." Isn't that something? That was his evaluation.

DOUGLASS: I guess a number of Democrats thought that. Then Brown did deliver on a court appointment for you.

HENSON: He did.

DOUGLASS: So you were appointed to the municipal court here. What about your impression of Unruh? Let's do the same thing. When you first came and what it was like in the last term? Did you have any change in feelings about how Unruh was functioning?

HENSON: We liked him all the way through. We tried to support him. We felt loyalty toward him. We felt loyalty to him, as against CDC.

DOUGLASS: So that original feeling you had stayed with

you?

HENSON: Oh, yes. It is still there today. When I became a judge, we supported Unruh for governor when he ran against Reagan. I saw him about a year ago.

DOUGLASS: So you stayed in touch with Unruh.

HENSON: Yes. I thought he was a very intelligent man. Very well informed on economic affairs. He had that bad press with him all the time. They never left him alone.

DOUGLASS: Since you were in on that campaign in this county--of course, Unruh was trying to run against a very popular governor--what was the perception of Unruh in this county?

HENSON: He didn't go over that well in this county either. He had that bad image as a big boss behind the scenes. From Los Angeles. People in this county didn't like that sort of image.

DOUGLASS: I gather you didn't agree with that.

HENSON: No. There was nothing you could do about it.

DOUGLASS: But there is no way to explain that?

HENSON: No way you could do that. Unruh's conduct in the campaign was not good. He never seemed to get across to the ordinary man in the street very well. Toward the end, he did. In the beginning, he couldn't seem to communicate well from a podium. In other words, Reagan had this great gift of communication. Unruh did not have

it. Unruh seemed to do all right just person-to-person, but, from a speech standpoint, he was not good.

DOUGLASS: How about as speaker? When he addressed the assembly, was he good at that?

HENSON: No. He was never a great speaker.

DOUGLASS: It was more being on the floor and moving . . .

HENSON: That's right. People knew who he was and knew he made the appointments. He had a lot of money to pass out during reelection campaigns. They respected his knowledge of things. He was never a great speaker.

DOUGLASS: I have had comments that he was incredible in the way he could work the vote and seemed to sense where the votes were.

HENSON: Oh, he knew everybody very well. He knew the districts. He knew what you could vote for and what you couldn't vote for.

DOUGLASS: Given your district?

HENSON: Given your district. He knew all the districts very well.

DOUGLASS: I think you said earlier that you were never caused to feel uncomfortable, particularly, because he didn't put you on the spot.

HENSON: No, never did.

DOUGLASS: What did you feel his mission was at this time? Obviously, to be governor someday. But what do

you feel was his mission in the assembly? What did he want in, both in terms of the assembly as an institution and also in terms of major legislation?

HENSON: I don't know that he was really all that interested in the issues. He was interested in personal power, naturally, and most of them are. I am sure he hoped to go on to something else. I think he may have hoped the [John and Robert F.] Kennedys would appoint him to something. He would have been very good at some cabinet position. I don't know why they didn't.

DOUGLASS: Were you surprised that he ran for state treasurer?

HENSON: No. I thought that is the type of thing he would be good at. He seemed to like that.

DOUGLASS: That seemed to be quite a comeback for him, didn't it? He really seemed to be endorsed.

HENSON: Yes. And do well at it.

DOUGLASS: I think we have pretty well covered this next question. You, in your own heart, would have liked to stay in the legislature.

HENSON: I would have liked to stay in the legislature.

DOUGLASS: You liked it.

HENSON: I liked it. I liked the action and everything like that. It was such a financial pinch. I think a lot of members at that time just pocketed some of the campaign contribution

money. I didn't do that. I didn't want to get involved in that. Now, they are using the campaign contributions for personal expenses. I just didn't want to get involved in anything like that. Then the home situation was very bad. So, I thought I had better just try to get out.

DOUGLASS: Even though, actually you were going to a full-time legislature at that point with better pay.

HENSON: Nobody thought the thing would ever pass. So many things had been up before. You could not count on it. I really thought that Pat Brown was going to lose that election. What really defeated him was that University of California upheaval and then the Watts riots. No matter what he would have done, he never would have made it.

DOUGLASS: And that was capitalized on by the Republicans?

HENSON: Yes. No matter who ran against him, he would have won.

DOUGLASS: Then you would not have had a Democratic governor. And from your viewpoint . . .

HENSON: Would not appoint me to anything. I really regret to this day I didn't stay on because it didn't solve any problems to get out.

DOUGLASS: Some people who are lawyers do have in mind getting a judgeship out of being in the legislature.

HENSON: A lot of them do.

DOUGLASS: Had that been one of your thoughts when you went?

HENSON: No. Not really.

DOUGLASS: You were going to see whether you liked it?

HENSON: Yes. I liked it.

DOUGLASS: How did you like being a judge?

HENSON: I didn't like that so much. It was kind of a comedown. I didn't do well at it, really. It didn't solve the home problems with the divorce. But now I am happily married. You should know that I am now happily married.

DOUGLASS: Good. When did you marry her?

HENSON: Ten years ago. We just celebrated our tenth anniversary. It was the greatest thing that ever happened. In fact, she was the mayor of Ventura.

DOUGLASS: When was she mayor?

HENSON: Ten years ago. The mayor married the judge. What do you think of that?

DOUGLASS: What was her name?

HENSON: Harriet Kosmo. So, we married ten years ago on the 22 [September]. That has been a wonderful relationship.

DOUGLASS: Check me out on this because I have lost track. Did you stop being a municipal judge?

HENSON: I retired. I did twenty years and that was all.

DOUGLASS: You did stay with that quite a while.

HENSON: Oh, yes. I stayed with it twenty years.

DOUGLASS: After that, did you engage in law practice?

HENSON: No. I just retired, and we bought a travel agency. I work in that. I travel. I am a travel writer now. A whole new world. A whole different thing. I do arbitrations here. I work as a judge every once in a while.

DOUGLASS: For more variety.

HENSON: Yes. It has worked out fine. We just got back from two weeks in Kenya, an interesting place.

DOUGLASS: I did want to ask you, in terms of who succeeded you. John Kenyon MacDonald ran for the Democratic party. Did you back him?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: In the primary, he was running against Bob Jennings.

HENSON: Yes. I backed MacDonald.

DOUGLASS: Did you have him on your mind for a while? Did you see him as a comer?

HENSON: Yes. He was a supervisor.

DOUGLASS: On the board of supervisors. And you probably worked with him on [legislation] and in party politics, too.

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: I gather you stayed active as a Democrat.

HENSON: I did. Yes.

DOUGLASS: You were on the state central committee when you

were in office.

HENSON: Yes. I have stayed active with politics. We have a great [congressional] campaign going here. [Senator] Gary [K.] Hart against Lagomarsino.

DOUGLASS: Right. That is an interesting one. Then MacDonald went on to defeat Spatz, although this was a lot tighter race. Was this a cliffhanger?

HENSON: It was not too much of a cliffhanger.

DOUGLASS: But it was 49,747 to 42,800, which is quite different from your record with him. You endorsed MacDonald.

HENSON: I did.

DOUGLASS: Let me talk a little bit about party politics, and I think we are done, unless there are some things you would like to address. You were a member of the platform and resolutions committee of the state central committee while you were a legislator. Do you remember anything in particular about doing that?

HENSON: I don't really remember much about that.

DOUGLASS: You were an active party man.

HENSON: I was.

DOUGLASS: I have some questions about CDC, but we have covered most of them. Did you go to the CDC state convention which Unruh tried to stack? This was the beginning of this confrontation

where Unruh didn't approve of CDC.

HENSON: I did, but I was not involved in that operation. I really was not a member, but I attended.

DOUGLASS: At that point, you had begun to dissociate yourself?

HENSON: Yes. That's right. I don't know why I even went there.

DOUGLASS: The whole business with [Simon] Casady and Cranston. You were not around?

HENSON: I attended some of those things, but I would not take any part in them. Casady was definitely hurting the party, as far as I was concerned.

DOUGLASS: I guess they were trying to get him to step down, but he would not.

You were a delegate to the 1964 Democratic Party National Convention when [President Lyndon Baines] Johnson was nominated. Is there anything to report out of that experience?

HENSON: It was all cut and dried. Johnson was going to be president. [U.S. Senator Hubert H.] Humphrey was going to vice president. I recall there was one controversy during the convention as to whether or not to recognize some Mississippi delegation. We had a big caucus meeting on it and went round and round. By the time we got through, it had already been decided.

[Laughter]

DOUGLASS: In that same '64 election, there was this whole business going on with the senate race, when Pat Brown and the CDC endorsed Cranston and Unruh endorsed [U.S. Senator Clair] Engle, who was dying, and Pierre Salinger emerged on the scene. Where were you in all of that?

HENSON: I was for Salinger. I really was for Engle. I really liked him.

DOUGLASS: So you were with Unruh's group on that?

HENSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Were you surprised that Salinger lost?

HENSON: Yes. I don't know how he did it. He won the primary. And [George] Murphy was not really all that great of a campaigner. And Murphy later was proved dishonest. But that's the way things went. You really don't know how the tide runs sometimes.

DOUGLASS: I am trying to remember, why was Murphy seen as dishonest? Was it campaign contributions?

HENSON: Later on in his term of office, it turned out he was accepting money from a lot of movie people for certain kinds of bills that he was sponsoring.

DOUGLASS: That they were interested in?

HENSON: That's right. He ended up in disgrace. That's when [John V.] Tunney won.

DOUGLASS: John Tunney took on Murphy. You were pitching Salinger in the county. How would you do that?

Salinger in the county. How would you do that?
What would you specifically do?

HENSON: I remember when Salinger came to the county. He was coming up for the county fair parade. They had that great tap dancer, Gene Kelly. We had a big meeting in the park. I introduced the tap dancer, and he introduced Salinger. They rode in the parade together.

DOUGLASS: So you were a facilitator?

HENSON: Yes. I was the county chairman for Johnson.

DOUGLASS: Are you still involved in party affairs?

HENSON: No. I go to the functions just to keep in contact with friends.

DOUGLASS: Was there any question in your mind when you started out as a young man that you would be a Democrat or Republican?

HENSON: I hate to say anything. I was against my father because he was a Republican. I was very liberal back in college. In the '48 campaign, I supported [Secretary of Commerce] Henry [A.] Wallace. He ran on that third party platform. That was a wild race.

DOUGLASS: That was when you were at junior college about to go to Stanford?

HENSON: I was at Stanford at the time.

DOUGLASS: OK. That is the time in life to look at these things. So you say you have become more conservative.

HENSON: More conservative.

DOUGLASS: Anything else you would like to say?

HENSON: I'll think of something in five minutes. I do appreciate it. I am glad it is on the up-and-up. When I first heard about this, I thought maybe it was some gimmick.

DOUGLASS: I can understand. This is a bona fide attempt to capture the legislature. It was a different kind of a legislature when you were there. It is very important to get people like you. It has been really interesting. I interviewed Stanford [C.] Shaw, who was in the assembly way back, and was in the senate, overlapping into your period. I have done Senator Stiern and Gordon Winton. I am doing Victor Veysey.

I really enjoy interviewing people out of this period because it is something we won't really have a lot of detail about later.

HENSON: It is such a machine operation up there now, isn't it? Have you been up there lately?

DOUGLASS: I have been in Sacramento recently. Why don't you comment on that. Where do you think the idea of a full-time legislature went? Do you think it succeeded? Would you have liked that? Or do you think this notion of a citizen-legislator made some sense?

HENSON: I didn't think that had anything to do with it.

When I was there, it was essentially full-time, anyway. It has gotten to be such a big money operation now. These fellows accepting honorariums, accepting contributions and using that for personal expenses.

DOUGLASS: And this thing that has just happened. The [Federal Bureau of Investigation] sting. And campaigning takes so much money.

HENSON: Yes. And the districts are so bad now. In 1980, when they reapportioned, Phillip Burton and Willie [L.] Brown [Jr.] got together and engineered certain districts where nobody but a Democrat could get elected. No matter who you are. In other districts, nobody but a Republican could be elected.

DOUGLASS: So you have a tremendous incumbency return factor.

HENSON: Yes. And I don't think they get much out of the representative when he is there, either. He knows that he is safe.

DOUGLASS: You think there is a lack of responsiveness?

HENSON: Yes. The whole thing has to be redone. I was hoping some independent commission would be approved that would reapportion the districts and make them more competitive.

DOUGLASS: That would be one answer, in your mind? To rearrange the districts.

HENSON: Yes. And eliminate honorariums completely. I

think it is just terrible to give these guys money for making speeches to groups. And eliminate campaign contributions, except for the year they are running.

DOUGLASS: And not have the carry-over factor?

HENSON: There is a carry-over factor. But certainly not allow them to buy suits as a campaign expense.

DOUGLASS: Or to use it on other campaigns than their own. Some of the things that are in the proposition.

HENSON: I heard this one Senator [Alfred H.] Song used about \$20,000 from his campaign funds to pay for his attorney's fees in a divorce. Nobody is really policing that. Just like this [Senator Joseph B.] Montoya now. Did you read that in the [Los Angeles] Times? Isn't it awful?

DOUGLASS: Yes. I read that in detail. A number of the people I have talked to who came out of your service vintage are making the comment that they are very concerned about what is happening to representative government. Do you feel that way?

HENSON: Yes. I am very much concerned. It is terrible. You have to have money to get any bill passed. You have to pay honorariums to the legislators.

DOUGLASS: But there do not seem to be any easy answers.

HENSON: It would take some kind of czar. Just like in baseball. Just like [Judge] Keenesaw Mountain

Landis to come in and take over and say, "You can do this and you can't do that."

DOUGLASS: Which means you have to get it through the legislature.

HENSON: Which you would never get.

DOUGLASS: And the initiative system leaves something to be desired. Well, any other thoughts that you would like to put on?

HENSON: I don't think so.

[End Session, September 28, 1988]

[End Tape 2, Side A]

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