

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

GLADWIN HILL

Journalist

October 22, November 25, and December 21, 1987
Hollywood, California

By Carlos Vasquez
Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

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None.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

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Interview Time and Place:

October 22, 1987

Hill's home in Hollywood, California
Session of one and three-quarter hours

November 25, 1987

Hill's home in Hollywood, California
Session of one and three-quarter hours

December 21, 1987

Hill's home in Hollywood, California
Session of two hours

Editing

Vásquez checked the verbatim manuscript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Insertions by the editor are bracketed. The interviewer also prepared the introductory materials.

Hill reviewed the transcript and returned it to the UCLA Oral History Program with only minor corrections. One major addition made by Hill at the time of transcript review is designated in the text by a footnoted bracket.

Papers

There exist no private papers which the interviewer was able to consult for this interview, although he reviewed Hill's published works.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives at UCLA along with the records relating to the interview. Master tapes are preserved at the California State Archives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Gladwin Hill was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 16, 1914, and was educated at Phillips Academy and Harvard University, where he earned a B.A. in Liberal Arts. Fascinated by journalism from an early age, he practiced his craft during his entire academic career, writing for The Phillipian at Phillips and serving as campus correspondent for the Boston Transcript, Time/Life, and Drew Pearson's "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column while at Harvard.

In 1936 Hill became a reporter and feature writer for the Associated Press based in New York City, and in 1942 came to California as a feature writer for the AP. During World War II, he was a war correspondent in England and France for the Associated Press and was acting bureau chief in Paris. In 1944 he joined the New York Times as a correspondent where he remained until his retirement in 1981. By that time he had become West Coast chief as well as national environmental correspondent for the Times.

As the New York Times bureau chief in Los Angeles for over twenty years, Hill became an astute observer and analyst of California politics. In 1968 he published an intimate study of California politics, Dancing Bear: An Inside Look at California Politics, which has become a classic on California's modern political history. His interest in and commitment to environmental issues led him to publish Our Troubled Waters (1971) and Madman in a Lifeboat: Issues of the Environmental Crisis (1973).

Hill presently lives in the Hollywood Hills. He continues to write columns and articles for newspapers and periodicals. He is a contributing editor to California magazine, serves as consultant to several law firms, and teaches journalism and editorial writing at the University of Southern California. He is active in the movement to control urban development.

I. LIFE HISTORY

[Session 1, October 22, 1987]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

Family History

VASQUEZ: Mr. Hill, would you tell us something about your life history--where you were born, where you were brought up--and things that might have had an influence on your journalistic and political views?

HILL: Sure. I was born in Boston in 1914. My father came from down in the swamps in Connecticut. His family had been down there since before the Revolution. My mother came from Ohio, from a family that had migrated there from West Virginia. Where they came from before West Virginia, I don't know. She had met my father in New York, and then they later moved to Boston. My father grew up in New Haven, or around the New Haven area.

Father's Experience during the Depression

Somehow or the other, very early in the game, he got into journalism and the newspaper business, because at one time he told me he was working on both a morning and an afternoon paper in New Haven. Then he went down to New York and he worked on several papers there, including the New York Times and the famous old [New York] Evening Sun, and a paper that was sort of a progenitor of the Wall Street Journal, called the [New York] Commercial Advertiser.

From that, he gravitated into the banking business, originally as a public relations man for a bank there in New York. From that, he gravitated into the securities business and by the time of World War I, which was about when I was born, he was a bond salesman. He had moved up to Boston then, and I remember he told me about going around during World War I, selling bonds. They put bond salesmen to work selling Liberty Bonds.

He always had a dim view of [Nicola] Sacco and [Bartolomeo] Vanzetti, because he would go up to the textile mills in Lawrence and Lowell and

do soap-box speeches at the noon break in the textile mills to try to get the workers to buy Liberty Bonds. He said Sacco and/or Vanzetti would be off at the side exhorting the workers not to buy Liberty Bonds for this "capitalist war." He was never very virulent about it at all, or impassioned, but when, later--ten years later--the great Sacco and Vanzetti case came up, why he didn't have any great sympathy for them. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: So he had known them or confronted them, personally?

HILL: Yeah. They had given him static. From bond selling, he went into the investment counseling business, working with the famous Roger Babson. [He] then worked back into banking, where he was a vice president of the Harvard Trust Company in Cambridge, at the same time that I was going to college in Cambridge.

Formal Education: Phillips Academy and Harvard University

VASQUEZ: Where did you grow up?

HILL: [My] family lived first in Winchester, a suburb of Boston, a middle-class suburb; later, in

Wellesley [Hills], which is another identical sort of suburb. Wellesley was the base of the Babson organization, which is why we came to live there. I went to the public schools in Wellesley, up through junior high school, and then went to Phillips Academy in Andover, for four years. Then on to Harvard [University]. I got out of Andover in '32. But somewhere along the line, I had already been bitten by the news bug. In fact, there's a picture in an album of me when I was so young--like under two years old--I was still in dresses. They used to dress little boys, put dresses on them then. I'm in a dress and I'm sitting on a hammock with a newspaper, looking at a newspaper. The only thing is, the newspaper's upside-down.

But I was fascinated with the process of getting out newspapers. We used to get different editions, even before I went away to prep school. I got different editions of the newspapers [to] see how they had changed the stories and the play between editions.

VASQUEZ: Oh, is that right? You were that much into [newspapers] already?

HILL: Later on, years later, I talked to other [newspaper] people and reporters who went through the same thing. One of the greatest reporters of our time was a New York Times man named [Laurence] Davies who, for many years, was bureau chief [of] the New York Times in San Francisco. Larry was a Kansas boy and he said he grew up and he used to get all the newspapers he could and he'd clip things out of them and keep files, and that kind of thing.

Practicing Journalism as a Student

So, anyway, when I went to Andover, I became editor of the school paper there, which was a little more than just a Mickey Mouse school paper. It was pretty advanced for a prep school. The big games every year were between Andover and Exeter. The paper was printed in a print shop downtown about a mile, a mile and a half from the school. We would, on the big games, write a play-by-play [story], telephone it down to the print shop, and when a big game ended, we would quickly print off some copies with the final score and get them up the hill from downtown. So when people were coming out of

the game, they would have the paper there with the final score on it, which was the stunt that the Boston newspapers used to do [for] the big games around there. That was how much we were into journalism.

I ended up at Andover with, oh, kind of mediocre marks, to say the least. So, when I went to Harvard [University], my father made me promise I would not go out for the Crimson, the Harvard Crimson.

VASQUEZ: What was the name of the paper at Andover, do you remember?

HILL: It was called The Phillippian. So, I kept my promise to him. I didn't go out for the Crimson. A lot of quite prominent people in the news business have come out of the Crimson, but I didn't. But while I was in college, there was a sort of a minor revolt on the campus, way back then, against the Crimson. Some guys got together and started a rival campus newspaper called the Harvard Journal. I did some work for them. I never really got on it, but I did some work for them. But, meanwhile, I was doing campus correspondence for one of the leading

papers in Boston, the Boston Transcript.

VASQUEZ: This was all during the four years you were at Harvard?

HILL: Yeah. I think while I was still at prep school I had gone into the Transcript and talked to them about eventually getting a job there. So, I used to do campus correspondence for them. And I did it for Drew Pearson's "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column. Somebody might ask what interest would the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column, which is all national politics, have in what went on at Harvard. The answer was that there were three Roosevelt sons in the area at that time. Two of them were in college with me, Franklin, Jr., and John; James Roosevelt was over in Boston, selling insurance. All three of them were constantly getting into scrapes and a lot of their escapades did not get fully reported in the papers.

VASQUEZ: So you would report it?

HILL: I'd send scuttlebutt to Drew Pearson on that. It kept me quite busy. Almost every night I would sit down and during the day I would scrounge up some information on something like that and send off a dispatch in the mail to Pearson. He paid

very nicely. I forget what it was, but he paid. But to my horror, I started picking up the paper, because the Boston Transcript ran his syndicated column, and there I would see my very words, which, of course, was exciting, except that they were exactly the way I had written them. And, apparently, he [would not] do anything in the way of editing what I sent him.

VASQUEZ: Under his byline?

HILL: Yeah. That taught me a lesson quite early, that I [had] better be real careful in what I said, because there was nobody going to screen it or anything. I did some stringing work, casual work, for Time and Life, too.

VASQUEZ: While you were still in college?

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: Did you have any particular focus on what you wrote? Were there particular things that interested you? Was politics the primary topic that you went after?

HILL: No. Harvard is a huge institution, and like all big universities, there was always something, usually something amusing, going on there. I think the first story I filed, or did from

Harvard, was about a chemistry building. One morning, somebody detected a tree, a sapling, growing out of a chimney on the top of this building. This was a disused chimney. So I did a kind of a tongue-in-cheek story about how slow and behind the times things were at Harvard. Of course, people liked to read that. Not only was grass growing in the streets, but trees were growing out of chimneys.

One story that was good every year was [about how] Harvard had this huge endowment and [how] people would leave the university their residual estates. [These] residual estates had all kinds of strange properties in them. There would be these "cats and dogs" of securities, and real estate, and stuff which Harvard would end up owning.

Well, Harvard had to publish a list of those holdings once every year in the treasurer's report. Harvard was chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it was not only a private institution, but had a state charter going back to the 1630s. So, they had some obligation to publish these holdings. Every year

we'd get a good story when that came out because I remember one year, [the endowment] had a lot of properties, odds and ends of real estate, all over the country that people had bequeathed to Harvard. If you looked at the addresses closely, you found that in some of the cities--Chicago, Saint Louis, whatnot--the addresses were in the red light district, or there would be something like [it] in Pittsburgh. I remember there was solemnly listed there, "The Hotsy Totsy Brassiere Shop" or something. We'd have a lot of fun with things like that. And the treasurer of Harvard at the time was a real august, proper Bostonian, named [George] Shattuck, from one of the old families there. Mr. Shattuck used to have apoplexy every time the story came out. He'd go to the university public relations people and say wasn't there some way they could suppress this.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Did you ever run into problems with what you printed?

HILL: No.

VASQUEZ: Oh, really?

HILL: No, Harvard was extremely liberal. All the

Boston papers--or several at the time--had campus correspondents who went running around trying to find provocative stuff like that.

One of the big annual stories in Boston was who Harvard was going to give honorary degrees to. A rumor went around one year that one of the recipients was going to be [Albert] Einstein, but [there was] no way of confirming it. I happened to be in Boston one day and an idea just popped into my mind. I went over to a phone booth in Boston, because I thought it wouldn't sound as nearby as Cambridge. I put on a very bad German accent, and I called one of the main university offices over there. In fact, I called the university public relations office, but by putting on this accent, they didn't recognize me. It was about a couple of days before commencement, and I said, "Well, this is Dr. Einstein and I've just arrived at South Station in Boston and I thought somebody was going to meet me." And the woman on the other end says, "Oh! Oh, Dr. Einstein, I'm so sorry there was nobody there. We'll see right away about getting somebody over there to bring you out to Cam-

bridge." I just said, "Thank you very much" and hung up, because I had my story, I knew they were expecting him. That was the kind of thing I used to do. [Laughter]

And then, also, keeping my promise to my father not to work on the Crimson, I'd get bored with my classes occasionally and would cut classes for a day and go over and do a day's work on the newspaper.

VASQUEZ: The Transcript?
Selling Subscriptions Door-to-Door

HILL: Yeah. And then I started working there in the summers, kind of summer relief, and started really learning the business and I worked there every summer that I was in college. Oh, wait a minute. No, let's see. The first summer I couldn't get any work over there. So, I went on a Curtis Publishing Company magazine crew, selling subscriptions door to door. We were assigned Providence, Rhode Island. It was the bottom of the Depression, and Providence was mainly an industrial town. It was flat on its rear and nobody had any money. And [we] had this magazine crew of five or six guys barreling

around in an old Moon automobile. That's one that everybody's forgotten about, Moon, which was sort of like a Buick. We were living at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] in Providence and the Curtis Publishing Company gave us something like a ten-dollar-a-week living allowance. We had to live on that, pay our board at the YMCA and eat on it, too, because nobody on the crew was selling hardly any subscriptions at all. I did that for a couple of weeks and then gave up because I was losing money. But then I later caught on with the summer work at the newspaper.

VASQUEZ: Why did you find it necessary to work during the summers, or why did you want to work during the summers?

HILL: Good question. You know, it wasn't that the family was poor. I could have stayed home and sat on my duff or, you know, played around. My parents didn't urge me to, telling me I should or anything. I think it was part of the Puritan [work] ethic which I grew up with, that you grew up amidst: you worked.

VASQUEZ: This was inculcated in you by your father?

HILL: Yeah, not by preaching, but by example. And not

only my father, but everybody all around. Very much of a New England atmosphere there.

VASQUEZ: Did you have an extended family that you interacted with?

HILL: No. I was an only child with no relatives around in the area at all.

VASQUEZ: So the most prominent impact on your upbringing was your parents?

HILL: Yes, very much so. Yeah.

Early Influences in Journalism

VASQUEZ: Who do you think most influenced your initial interest in journalism?

HILL: Well, I suppose my father, telling me stories about his newspaper days and the fact that I, somehow or the other, was interested from the beginning in the whole process. But he never urged me to go into the newspaper business. It was just [that] I had this consuming interest in news, fascinated with knowing about something that had happened and then being able to spread the word. I've still got the bug now. I'm a news junkie. You know, I've been off hour-to-hour, day-to-day news for several years now. But I'll still wake up in the middle of the night and

turn on the radio to hear what the news is.

Print Journalism and the Advent of Radio

VASQUEZ: Were you impressed at all with radio?

HILL: Radio was just really coming into its own at that time when I was starting out, it was very much in its infancy. I think, chronologically, that some of the first radio broadcasting of big news was, oh, like 1924, maybe, a national convention, something like that. Radio news was really nothing at the time. Whatever there was, was just what they would steal out of the newspapers and read [on the air]. I'm sure of that because all the time I was working at the Transcript-- which was up until 1936, till I graduated from college--the Transcript, which was on Washington Street in Boston in a big, old building, had great, big blackboards hung out in front on the ground floor. Boys would come out and chalk up headlines on those boards and people would stand around and gawk at them, reading them. Those went on, I think, up until 1936. Well, if radio news had been doing much, people wouldn't have been doing that. I think other newspapers in Boston had the same thing. So it wasn't until

just about then that radio news started getting a foothold. Of course, radio itself was quite strong. During the Depression you had everything in the country coming to a halt about 5:00 at night, so people could listen to "Amos 'n' Andy."

VASQUEZ: Do you remember what your attitude was towards radio, being a journalist?

HILL: As far as radio news was concerned, it was kind of a raffish, beyond-the-pale occupation. There really weren't any radio reporters. I don't recall rubbing elbows with any when I was working up to '36. Of course, gosh, radio news came up awful fast after that, because in '39--yes, just about '39--you had [Edward R.] Ed Murrow saying, "This is London."

VASQUEZ: How about people like Walter Winchell? Did you see him as an entertainer or as a newsman?

HILL: Just a gossip guy. I knew him in New York. You see, right after college I went down to New York. I didn't know him well but, you know, you'd rub elbows with him down there.

II. PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM CAREER

Working for the Associated Press

VASQUEZ: Then you went to work where?

HILL: At the Associated Press main office in New York.

VASQUEZ: How did you make that connection?

HILL: I went down there just about the time I was graduating from college. Because my old boss at the Transcript was a veteran Associated Press man named [William] Bill Playfair. All the time I had been working at the Transcript, he had told me that if I really wanted to get into the newspaper business, I ought to spend some time with the Associated Press. That that was the big league. So, I went down to New York and asked them for a job and they said, "Nothing doing." So, I went back and worked on the Transcript for just a few weeks and suddenly a vacancy came up in New York and somebody had my name, resume or what not, there in front of them in New York. I got a call and the guy said, "We've got a job for you."

Getting Hired in Journalism

VASQUEZ: Did you submit any of your writing?

HILL: I guess when I went down originally and talked to them I might have taken some clippings down and showed them. I think their main thing, probably, was that I had a recommendation from this man,

Bill Playfair, who was known and respected in the AP. He had only gone with the Transcript about the time I started there in '32. But he had been one of their real hot reporters for many years on the AP, there in Boston and all around. He worked alongside Damon Runyan when Runyan was working for International News Service. He told me he and Runyon, I think, both covered the Sacco and Vanzetti execution, among other things. So, that was how I got the lucky break to go to New York.

So I always tell kids today, when they want to get into the news business, they will go around and ring doorbells and, you know, generally get turned down. But I tell them don't just drop the thing there, if the Alhambra Post-Advocate said they haven't got a place. Check again two or three weeks or a month later, and keep doing it, because there's always turnover and you never know when a vacancy is coming up. Down at the [Greater Los Angeles] Press Club, almost every year they give a seminar for young people coming out on how to get jobs. I tell them that when they're looking for a job, they

feel like they are in an inferior position, an underdog. But I tell them it's quite the opposite.

When somebody running an organization has a vacancy, he's desperate to fill it and that's the big opportunity. Keep that in mind if you have anything like the qualifications for an opening. The guy's going to be pathetically grateful to hire you because there's nothing worse than being a manager and having a hole in your organization with work to be done and nobody there to do it.

VASQUEZ: Did you study journalism at Harvard, formal classes in journalism?

HILL: They don't have any. They don't, to this day. While I was there, or shortly afterwards, they started the Nieman Fellowships, but that is not really a journalism course. What that is, if you're out and already in the business and already have a foothold and there's some specialty that you want to make a study of--labor relations or business or anything, archaeology, whatever--if you've got a good story to give about why you should get a fellowship, why you

get it. But there are just no journalism [courses]. [There is] English literature, or Elizabethan literature, anything you want, but there are no journalism courses as such.

VASQUEZ: You studied politics and government and history?

HILL: I majored in history, government, and economics when I was in college, yeah.

Academic Preparation of Journalists

VASQUEZ: What's your feeling about training in journalism departments as a way to become a journalist?

There seem to be two schools of thought on this.

HILL: Yeah, I really never have decided. I think it depends an awful lot on the particular case and the circumstances at the time, [and] the individual. But when UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] had that graduate school of journalism, I used to go out there and give talks, and there would be all these wide-eyed young people there, saying that they wanted to get into the news business. And my feeling, which I never voiced, was, "Well, if you're so eager to get into the news business, why aren't you on the [Daily] Bruin?" Because, that's a good starting point, a good way for somebody to get their stuff

in print. Of course, everybody, I suppose, can't be on the Bruin, and there's competition for places.

I think your courses in the fundamentals of journalism can't do any harm on some of the basics, like what is libel and that sort of thing. Or even in the courses in the administrative and business side of newspapers, or a course in the technology. But I think anybody equips himself a lot better for reporting if they major in the social sciences. I think any journalism courses you take really should be incidental. I figure if you're going into news work, it's like you are coming into a ball game in about the fifth inning. You want to know what's gone on before in the ball game. You want to have some background, so that if you don't have some grounding in history, government, and economics--I mean, your main areas of real life--you're handicapped. It's more so, much more so now than when I was starting.

When I was starting, we had reporters in the news business who were practically illiterate. They had never gone beyond high school and they

couldn't write worth a darn, but they were good "legmen" and they could get around and fraternize with politicians or cops or whoever, and they could dig up news. That's how rewrite men originated in the newspaper business. You had people out on the street who weren't necessarily writers at all, but who were good at digging out news. Then you had people in the office who would put it into plain English to put into print. But today, if you hire a reporter, then he's got to know something about nuclear physics. He's going to know about the pros and cons of atomic power and nuclear explosions and he's got to know some rudiments of chemistry in connection with environmental problems and all sorts of things like that, as well as being literate and being able to write. We still have rewrite men, but they are sort of supplementary in the process.

The Quality of Writing in Contemporary Journalism

VASQUEZ: Do you think the writing has gotten better in journalism?

HILL: Yes, very, very much. Yes.

VASQUEZ: Why do you think that is?

HILL: Well, because newspapers always used to report

things in sort of stilted, stuffy, very proper, dignified, austere, aloof language. Now, they talk more like the man on the street. I think up on the walls of all the Wall Street Journal offices [there] are signs that say, "Write like you talk."

VASQUEZ: Do you think this is a function of the electronic media?

HILL: No, I think it came in before that. In fact, it came in, that trend toward more readable writing, while I was at the AP. I think it was while I was at the AP. They hired the famous Dr. Rudolph Flesch, the immigrant from Austria or Hungary who made a career out of counseling on language. English was a second language to him, but maybe because of that, he mastered it and ended up writing a whole series of books, I guess a half a dozen books. But at the time I was at the AP, I think he was doing consultant work for big companies, getting people to express themselves lucidly. The AP hired him at that time, and a lot of other newspapers hired him, too, and there was a trend towards direct, plain, clear, and lucid writing.

VASQUEZ: What do you think did the most for your writing? Writing? [Laughter]

HILL: Oh yeah, sure. You know, writing and reading.

VASQUEZ: Is there any one person that you can think back on who probably taught you the rudiments of writing for journalism?

HILL: No, I think with me it's something that, thank heaven, has grown as I've gone along. As I look back today and read some of the things that I wrote many years ago, I can hardly believe that I wrote them. I don't recognize them. Because it wasn't until fairly recent years I realized--and this is what Dr. Flesch was teaching all the time--the value, the power or strength of clear, simple sentences. I think for a long time I was sort of captivated by a more ornate sort of writing, like some of the profiles in the New Yorker, a Nunnally Johnson sort of writing. More ornate writing is fine for books, and you can have fun with it in occasional magazine articles, but for news writing, and really strong, powerful writing, I think the simpler and more direct you can be, the better. Which, of course, is the way Hemingway scored. He kind of went through the

evolution himself. He more or less created a sensation by veering away from the old, ornate, and complex.

VASQUEZ: Who is your favorite writer?

HILL: Oh, I would say Gene Fowler, who wrote Timberline, and wrote Good Night, Sweet Prince, about John Barrymore and the Hollywood crowd. He's just a marvelous writer, and I love his things. You don't run into many people today who are even familiar with him, at all.

VASQUEZ: Is it because of his lucidity that you like his style?

HILL: Yes. I remember I met him, finally, after many years of admiring him. He came into the Los Angeles Times one day when my office, the New York Times bureau, was in there. I was introduced to him and I said, "Just tell me one thing, would you, Mr. Fowler? Does it get any easier as you go along?" And he said, "Hell, no!" [Laughter]

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Well, it does to some people, but it's rare. Oh, on occasion, on rare occasions, it's

come easy to me when I've gotten an idea and the whole thing is sort of formed in my mind, full blown, and I could just strum it out.

My kids went to the [University] Elementary School at UCLA. I remember it was about the time they were there, or shortly afterwards, that some sort of great public flap arose about progressive education. Corinne Seeds at UCLA, at the University Elementary School, they were exponents of progressive education. But the general public equated progressive education with lack of discipline and anarchism and not learning and all sorts of stuff like that that wasn't true.

I began thinking about it one day, I remember, one Sunday, and I sat down at a typewriter and wrote a piece called, "A Father Looks at Progressive Education" and sent it off to the Atlantic Monthly. The editor then was an old buddy of mine from the Boston Transcript. The piece ran in the Atlantic Monthly just the way I had written it originally, the way it had first come to me. Everything fitted together. I think it was the National Education Association, yeah, I think they picked the thing up and distributed it in jillions of reprints.

The Impetus to Write

VASQUEZ: So do you think you write better when you're clear, when you're convinced, when you're passionate about something?

HILL: I don't know.

VASQUEZ: Some people can't write [unless it's] something they really feel strongly about.

HILL: Yeah. Writing, you're performing a brain operation. You're trying to implant a certain idea or picture in somebody else's brain. So the perpetual challenge is how do you do it. I have never edited any film, but I know what film editing is about. It always struck me that the process is similar. In editing film, I know that a fellow is sitting there at a rack and he's got a whole bunch of strips of film hanging there and he's trying to put a film together. The question that's in his mind is, "What does the audience want to know next? What do they want to see next? Which one of these pieces do I splice in and how long do I give it?" I know your good film editors, they will calculate it right down to the one frame of film, how long that image should last, that picture should last, before you

go on to something else. To me, the writing process, nonfiction, expository writing, is the same sort of thing, where you're asking yourself, "Okay, what do I move to next that will best make the impression on the reader's mind? I want to be the most clear and the easiest for the reader to follow."

VASQUEZ: So you're trying for sequential images, consecutive ideas? Is that the way you're approaching it?

HILL: Yeah.

More on Working for the Associated Press

VASQUEZ: Now, tell me about your years as a war correspondent in Europe during the war. From '36 to '44, you were in Europe as . . .

HILL: No, not that soon. I went to New York and I started with the AP in July of '36. Most of the people who went to work in that office were kind of utility infielders. You started out as a reporter and rewrite man. You were out on the street some of the time and in the office a lot of the time doing rewrite. Then you got a fling at wire editing. They had all these wire circuits running all over the country that come

in there to New York. There are a couple of wires, main trunk lines, that went all the way across the country to newspapers. And then there were these regional wires, loops; then state wires. So, as a wire editor, anything that originated in the New York office, why you edited that before it went out on the wire. Or you took stuff from the regional wires and decided whether it should go on to the trunks or not. If so, at what length and [you] looked it over, too. Regional stuff that comes in, some of it is not as tightly written as it could be. Generally, it was an editing job, so I did quite a bit of that, too. And I did feature writing. Then I became kind of a roving feature writer, going around the country [to] different places.

VASQUEZ: Did you focus primarily on political issues, or political matters?

HILL: No. No.

VASQUEZ: Just anything that you were assigned?

HILL: Yeah, actually not an awful lot of politics. There was some, but not a great deal. I remember when Thomas Dewey ran for governor of New York. We worked on New York politics there and I

remember that campaign because on election night, he threw me out of his headquarters.

And I remember when Wendell Willkie came out to run for president. He had a press conference down at his offices down on Wall Street. I think that was the one time that I saw Damon Runyan, because he was there at that press conference. He was doing his column then, not doing straight news, for International News Service, or Hearst. But I remember when we came out of the Willkie press conference and I said to Runyan, "Golly, he's a big man" or something like that. Runyan said, "He looks like a polar bear." [Laughter]

Anyway, right after Pearl Harbor, the AP got scared that the Japs were going to invade the West Coast. They needed more people in the bureau here in Los Angeles, so they sent me out from New York. I came out early in '42 and worked in the bureau here. And of course the Japanese did not invade, so I was kind of a fifth wheel in the bureau, doing features and a lot of Hollywood things. [I] had a fine time for about six months, and then decided that with a war going on, if you were going to be in the big league, you had better be a war correspondent.

So I told New York I wanted to be a war correspondent. So, about August of '42, I went to Europe.

III. WORLD WAR II CORRESPONDENT

The Allied Build-up in England

VASQUEZ: Where were you stationed? Or did you move throughout Europe?

HILL: Well, of course, '42, was the time we were just starting the very early stages of a military buildup in England. [There was] nothing there in the way of ground forces. They had the Eighth Air Force going; there was a small number of bombers. Then the Ninth Air Force [was] developing alongside of it, with fighter bombers, light bombers. So, I covered mainly the Eighth Air Force. As the military buildup went on in England over the next two years, why, of course, the Eighth Air Force got bigger and bigger.

To start out, by the time I got there, there were just four bomb groups going and, by coincidence, there were about four principal American correspondents covering the Eighth Air Force. One of them was Walter Cronkite. I was working for AP, and there was a guy from the New York Times covering it, and a fellow from INS

[International News Service]. Well, Cronkite was working for United Press [International] at that time. And so each of us picked a bomber base and sort of adopted it and covered its activities. The base that I happened to end up with was commanded by Curtis LeMay who ultimately became chief of staff of the air force.

I did other coverage, too, at the time. I remember Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt came over. I think it was in the fall of '42 during a triumphal morale tour of England there. I remember covering her because it was so exhausting to cover her. She was just so indefatigable and she was a demon sightseer. She was notorious for that and by the time you got through a day of sight-seeing with her, you were worn out. But I mainly worked on the air force.

As the military buildup proceeded, we needed more and more people to cover only air force activities. We had the Eighth and the Ninth and I forget how many air bases we ended up with over there. In the Eighth Air Force, there were about fifty or sixty bomb groups. So just on the Associated Press, we had about four people--five,

including myself--assigned to the air force. I ended up running this staff within the bureau, because nobody else professed to know anything about covering the air force. I had been with it from the beginning. So I spent most of my time in the office, almost on an administrative basis, shooting guys out to cover things. And then came the invasion.

Oh, and Cronkite. In that early stage there, when I said there were only four bases, we kept pressing the air force, General [Ira] Eaker, to let us fly on bombing missions. He was very leery of doing it. He was very cautious because he had plenty of trouble on his hands getting the Eighth Air Force built up, getting the men and the planes that he needed. He was fighting the Pentagon and fighting the British and everybody. Not the Pentagon, but the War Department. He didn't need any correspondents being killed. Finally, we kept pressing him, so he said, "Okay, we'll let you guys go on a mission, but we're just not going to have you there as supercargo, as fifth wheels. In case something happens, you've got to be able to grab

a gun and shoot." Which, technically, would have been a violation of the Geneva Convention. As correspondents, you're not supposed to have anything to do with weapons. So they sent us to gunnery school.

Attending Gunnery School

VASQUEZ: Now you were a civilian?

HILL: Yeah. They sent our little group to gunnery school. This was a school run by the RAF [Royal Air Force]. They taught us the rudiments of ballistics, how bullets flew. Then you learned the old thing of how to take a fifty-calibre machine gun apart and put it together again, how it worked, so you could work one. That was the main armament on the B-17's, aside from the bombs. This course at gunnery school lasted maybe a week or ten days. In the group I was in that went through was William Wyler, the movie director, and his crew that were over there to make the famous picture The Memphis Belle. Willie Wyler and I became pretty good friends, because he sat beside me in these classes. We had a lot of classroom stuff. Then they'd give us exams and quizzes and things. I always said

if it weren't for me, The Memphis Belle wouldn't have been made, because Wyler was always looking over my shoulder at my paper to see what I had written.

VASQUEZ: Was it cribbing?

HILL: Cribbing my answers.

The "Writing Sixty-ninth"

VASQUEZ: Was it a condition for them to learn this stuff so they could go on the flights? Is that it?

HILL: Yeah. So then we finally all went on a raid on February 26 in '43. That was one time I got the edge on Cronkite, because the group that I was in was the lead group in the whole operation, and the plane that I was in was the lead plane. Cronkite's group was somewhere behind. Afterwards, we formed a mythical organization called the "Writing Sixty-ninth." One of the people was Andy Rooney. He was working for Stars and Stripes. I guess there were about seven correspondents, all together, on that mission. The New York Times correspondent, a guy named [Robert W.] Bob Post, he was not in a B-17, he was in a B-24. The B-24's were kind of the tail-end in the operation because they were slower.

There weren't so many of them over there at the time. They were a slower plane and their optimum altitude was different from the B-17's. Anyway, they were much more vulnerable than the B-17's and the one Bob Post was in got shot down and we never heard from him again.

Then, after that, they didn't let us go on any more missions, because Post had been killed. So we covered everything on the ground, except that we did a lot of flying around in England on B-17's, and on B-26's, the old B-26's, Martin Marauders, a light bomber, and on practice runs and that kind of thing. Once in a while, they'd take a B-17 up just before dinner at night, up to altitude to freeze the ice cream. Those planes weren't pressurized, of course. So you'd get up about twenty thousand feet, the temperature might be twenty below zero. It was a great way to freeze quickly. [Laughter]

Covering the Normandy Invasion

The next time we flew on a mission was on the Normandy invasion. On that one, I was lucky, too. I flew on a B-26, one of the medium bombers. Cronkite elected to fly a B-17. The B-

17's didn't have as good, as glamorous, an assignment. The medium bombers I was with, their assignment was to bomb the beachhead just before the forces came ashore at 6:00 in the morning, which was what we did. I don't know what Cronkite's B-17's were supposed to do. I'll ask him; he's going to be out here next week at UCLA. His group, I think, got lost in the fog and ended up in a Thames estuary [Laughter] or somewhere like that.

But I got an eyewitness, bird's eye view of the landing and filed the first eyewitness story on the Normandy landing. Which didn't make any difference. It wasn't a beat because everybody's stuff got held up for about twelve hours till [General Dwight D. Eisenhower] Ike gave them the word "go" to release the stuff. But we flew over and bombed the beachhead at H-hour and then swung around over to the Cotentin Peninsula there. We were down quite low and could see a great sea of parachutes down there where our paratroops had landed. The plane turned around and came back to England. That way, I got down on the ground fast and was able to say that our troops had landed,

and more than on the beach, but inland and that I had seen them. I described all this great expanse of parachutes and things.

A lot of the correspondents were on some of the attack vessels. They didn't have anything like an eyewitness view of what happened. They had a lot more difficulty getting their material back in communications. But what I did was deliberate. I tried to figure out a way that I could get over there and see what was happening and get back, because whatever you saw was no good unless you could get the information out.

European Counterparts in Journalism

VASQUEZ: Did you interact at all with European journalists when you were there?

HILL: Oh, yeah. We had about two years there where we were based in London, in Fleet Street. All sorts of press conferences and things. The English reporters were all over the place there in London. They were kind of a scruffy bunch there because the top-rank English people were all war correspondents or they were out with the armed forces, so the ones left in London were kind of second- and third-echelon. They were all sort of

National Enquirer types, scandalmongers, you know. The competition among the English newspapers seemed curious to us because they would vie with each other, all of these Fleet Street guys, in trying to figure an exclusive angle. But they'd try to figure it out before they had any facts at all. The facts didn't bother them.

VASQUEZ: They didn't let them get in the way? [Laughter]

HILL: Yeah. So you would go to a press conference, for instance, where say an air force officer was giving a briefing on the air campaign and one of these Fleet Street, London reporters would have figured out ahead of time that his angle was whether any fliers were getting frostbitten, because they didn't have warm suits or something. So no matter what was being discussed at the press conference, no matter what came up, this guy would butt in with his question on that. Whether the man said "yes" or "no" or "maybe," he'd have a peg for his preconceived story. So we had that thing coming at us from all directions, and it used to irk the American correspondents a lot because it would throw the

discussion off the track and we didn't operate that way. We wanted to find out the overall big picture from whomever was talking.

VASQUEZ: That's what I was getting at. How did you compare European versus U.S. journalism? I would imagine, in this case, mostly British. But how did you compare them?

HILL: Well, that was the way it was. Of course, the London papers were terribly restricted at the time because of the paper shortage. They were limited to maybe about four pages an issue, so everything was very condensed. What you got was kind of an early version of USA Today. Everything had to be said in a couple of hundred words. So these guys were always striving for sensational stuff that they could cram into a couple of hundred words.

Comparing American and European Journalism

VASQUEZ: Now, maybe the war situation is a bad backdrop to compare journalism. Do you have any opinions now of the difference between how Europeans write and report news and the way that American journalists do?

HILL: No, I don't think so. You know, because of the

change in the whole picture. It has become one world, and communications have become so immediate. There isn't the variance of distance that there used to be, and so I think everybody kind of deals in a common language now.

VASQUEZ: So that language and culture you don't feel get in the way?

HILL: No. In journalism, your language, mores, and approaches, and everything are pretty much the same.

The Associated Press Bureau Chief in Paris

VASQUEZ: Now, after the war, you came back to Los Angeles, is that right?--you became bureau chief here in L.A.?

HILL: Yeah, after the invasion, I went up and I ran the AP bureau in Paris for a few months. The bureau there was mostly concerned with local coverage of things going on in Paris, because guys out with the armed forces would generally file direct to London and from London it would go to New York.

So I found myself in Paris there, running a bureau and worrying about things like fashion shows or what their Chamber of Deputies did that day and that kind of thing. I screamed at New

York and said I wanted to get off of that sort of stuff and get back to being a war correspondent.

About that time I went back to New York on a quick furlough and I ran into resistance from the AP on giving me another assignment. So I went over to the New York Times to see if they had an opening then. And that's when I switched jobs, which was right at the time of the Battle of Bulge. Then I came back and the Times sent me right back to where the AP would not send me.

I was assigned to cover the First Army, which was then up west of the Rhine. In fact, the base was at Spa, Belgium, and the press camp was at Spa. This was right after the Battle of the Bulge, we were just recovering our breath. So I covered First Army up until we got across the Rhine. And then when we were up there I came down with mononucleosis and had to go back to Paris and a hospital. By the time I got out of the hospital, why, the shooting was over.

I went up to Berlin and worked briefly on the Nuremberg Trials. Then I went up into Poland after the Potsdam Agreement. One of the provisions of the Potsdam Agreement was that

Western correspondents were to be allowed into Poland which, of course, was Russian-held territory at the time. And I did a series of stories on the Russian occupation of Poland, which the Russians didn't like. Moscow Radio came out when these stories were printed in the New York Times and called me a "journalistic gangster." But I had told the Times when I signed on at the time of the Battle of the Bulge, that I had no ambition to be a peace-time foreign correspondent because I had gotten married just a couple of weeks before I went overseas. By VE [Victory in Europe] Day, due to that trip back to New York at the time of the Battle of the Bulge, [I had two children]. I'd only seen one of them briefly during that furlough. I had never lived with my wife. We'd never had a home. So I wanted to get back here. So I told the Times that I'd stay over there for the duration plus six months. Which took me up to about February of '46. I came back to New York and they said, "Well, what do you want to do?" And having experienced Los Angeles and California just before I went overseas I was enthralled with it. I said, "Well, California."

IV. THE NEW YORK TIMES BUREAU IN LOS ANGELES

Opening a Bureau in Los Angeles

The managing editor said, "Well, we've been thinking of opening a bureau in Los Angeles. Do you want to go out do that?" And I said, "Sure." And so I came out here. Organically, I have never worked a day for the New York Times in New York. I've done casual work in the office back there, but technically, all the time I was stationed here running the Los Angeles bureau and built it up from just myself to, I don't know, three or four people.

VASQUEZ: Tell me about that process [of] building a bureau. But before we do that, did you find journalism being approached differently out here on the West Coast than it was on the East Coast? Or was journalism basically in the hands of people that had been [originally] from the East Coast?

"Provincial" Los Angeles in 1946

HILL: No. In '46, Los Angeles still was quite provincial in many ways. Of course, the war had really knocked the old provincialism pretty hard and knocked the whole social matrix. It had pretty

well changed it because you had this tremendous influx of various sorts of people from all over the country for war work and that kind of thing: hillbillies and Okies and black people from the South and all that. But there still were traces of the prewar provincialism in L.A., particularly in a kind of a societal way.

Like the thing that stands out in my mind was somebody in the Los Angeles Times very solemnly telling me, I mean, casually, but very earnestly (this was a man who lived in Glendale which, of course, even in that time was kind of a lily-white community), "Well, of course, Thursday's bump day." And I said, "What do you mean?" "Oh, that's the day when all the servants get a day off and they're out," meaning, mostly black people. And he said, "They're out and they bump you, try to bump you off the sidewalk." And there were sort of sociological strands like that still going on. Of course, there were still restrictive covenants in those days and the antipathy to Japanese had not died down very much. They didn't look at the internment camp thing the way we're looking at it now. And so,

in terms of journalism, what I found here was a very provincial sort of journalism.

It was sort of like the national journalism of twenty or thirty years before. It was all the Front Page gee-whiz sort of thing with. . . . Oh, particularly on the Hearst papers. There were all these very raffish types and gung-ho city editors like [James] Jim Richardson and [Agnes] Aggie Underwood. But a lot of the reporters were very raffish. They didn't quite have a whisky bottle sticking out of one coat pocket and an American Mercury in the other, the old stereotype, but it was sort of the old picture-stealing mores and attitudes of the 1920s that took you back to the original Front Page.

VASQUEZ: Who set the tone? The [Los Angeles] Times?
Who set the standards?

HILL: It kind of went two different directions. Of course, the Times was an establishment house organ, and the Hearst set-up, it was the old man's pet thing. So it sort of epitomized all the characteristics of the Hearst organization.
Newspaper Coverage of California Politics in 1946

VASQUEZ: What was the coverage of California politics like

when you came out here?

[Interruption]

HILL: Coverage of politics. Yeah. Well, of course, the Republicans were running California at that time, in '46. So you had sort of an axis there between the Los Angeles Times and the Knowlands up in Oakland and [Laughter]. . . . Of course, the main view I had of it--and it was a pretty good view--was the Los Angeles Times. My office was in the L.A. Times and I was rubbing elbows with Kyle Palmer, the grand vizier of the Chandler political establishment and political interests, and [Chester G.] Chick Hanson, his assistant. So that some of your most objective coverage came from the [Los Angeles] Examiner, which [included] Carl Greenberg and a few other people like that.

VASQUEZ: What attracted the attention of the press about politics at the time?

HILL: I don't know what you mean.

VASQUEZ: Well, did they cover the legislative sessions in detail? Did they do sensational kinds of things? Were they more concerned about personalities or about issues?

HILL: Things were covered very much in an establishment way. Of course, Kyle Palmer was a center of political machinations. When they wanted to initiate something, why Kyle Palmer would come out with a column saying, "Rumors are flying that so-and-so may run for the state senate." Well, you could interpret that in various ways. It might mean that he had advance information, that somebody had decided to run and he didn't want to break it categorically at that time. Or it could mean that the establishment was trying to push this person into running. [Laughter] Or it could be a trial balloon to smoke out what the potential opposition might think. You had to read between the lines on almost everything.

Coverage of the State Legislature

VASQUEZ: How did the different papers treat the state legislature, for example?

HILL: Quite fairly and pretty much straight away. Not very critically. All political coverage, national even, seems in retrospect to have been sort of naive. It was an era of deadpan coverage of superficial happenings, surface happenings. "Mr. A made a speech and he said this, and Mr. B made a speech and he said

this, and Mr. B made a speech and he said this." Even most of your national coverage was that way, too. There was not much interpretation or analysis or putting things into perspective or into focus. I remember up into the fifties, for instance, the New York Times would have no truck with opinion polls. They looked on opinion polls like a skunk at a picnic, or something.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Coverage of Public Opinion Polls

The New York Times would look down its nose and they would run a summary of a Gallup poll, about two inches in a box, about a day or two later. I think the copyright on that runs out, becomes public information in twenty-four, forty-eight hours, something like that. That's all they'd run in the way of opinion polls. When we were covering a campaign, they thought it was pretty daring and progressive to send out teams all around the country to try and sense the public sentiment. We would interview people in a shopping center or something like that,

on a numerical basis. Stand in a shopping center all afternoon and talk to fifty people and figure out whether they were for [Governor Adlai E.] Stevenson or for Eisenhower. On that sort of research we would base stories and, of course, it was the most unscientific kind of thing you could do. In a shopping center, you've got nothing like a cross section of the population. So that was how naive a great deal of political coverage was, even then.

I was covering several states out here, covering all the way over to Texas. And they'd be doing a survey on Eisenhower's prospects or Stevenson's prospects, or whatever. The message would come from the national desk, "See what the party chairmen say." That's like asking a football coach who's going to win the game, you know. It's ridiculous, terribly naive.

Covering California Politics for an East Coast Audience

VASQUEZ: Did you have a hard time trying to enlighten people back East on the nature of California politics?

HILL: Oh, gosh, yes. That was a perpetual problem

because you had many of those people back there, at least mentally, had never been west of the Hudson River and thought there were buffalos and Indians running around in Los Angeles. The perpetual struggle was to enlighten them. Very early in the game, I'd say, by 1950 or so, we who were covering politics could sense that Nixon in some way or other was a little bit fishy. We would try to get some of that into our stories, and very quickly you'd find editors in New York saying, "Gee, you know, it sounds like you were leaning on Nixon or going out of your way to find out adverse things about him," or something like that. But way back then, you know, twenty-five years before the nation saw him in his true colors, we started getting inklings to his character. But it was almost impossible to get it across.

VASQUEZ: How much interest was there on the part of the New York Times for California politics at the time?

HILL: A great deal, because from the time I was first here, gosh, way up into the seventies, there was hardly a time when there wasn't somebody from

California who wasn't a presidential possibility. They had an interest in lesser politics, too, because all the way down you'd be getting colorful figures like [Samuel W.] Sam Yorty in city hall. There was interest at intermediate levels. As far as the California legislature went, for the East, they were mostly interested in wacky things.

VASQUEZ: [Arthur H.] Artie Samish?

HILL: Yes, corruption and rococo legislative salients and that sort of thing.

VASQUEZ: How about [Senator] Jack [B.] Tenney? Was he someone that there was interest in?

HILL: Yeah, we covered the Tenney things pretty heavily. And those secondary Hollywood black-list hearings that they had in that documentary last night [Legacy of the Hollywood Blacklist], why, we covered those quite thoroughly.

VASQUEZ: How would you compare the coverage that the "outside" papers gave the Tenney hearings here in Los Angeles, and the way that the local papers covered it?

HILL: Oh, of course, any time that you were dealing with a Hollywood figure, the locals would really

balloon the story. I mean banner headlines, that sort of thing. The prominence, the space, and headlines, whatnot, would shrink as you moved eastward. But the New York Times was always interested.

Anticommunist Hysteria in East Coast and West Coast Newspapers

VASQUEZ: Do you think that East Coast papers got as caught up as West Coast papers in the anticommunist hysteria?

HILL: They got what?

VASQUEZ: As caught up in the anticommunist hysteria in the '49, '50, '51 period?

HILL: Well, I don't know. I couldn't generalize.

VASQUEZ: Let's say the [New York] Times.

HILL: I think the Times took a pretty judicious view all the way through. You know, they never liked [Senator Joseph] Joe McCarthy. I don't remember what their editorials were at the time [of] the Unfriendly Ten in Washington, but I would bet if you look back on them now, they probably took a dim view of those proceedings. In any case, the coverage would be much less emotional and much less hysterical about it than most of your papers

in the other states. Of course, here in Los Angeles, you had the Hearst papers that were notoriously by tradition intensely anticommu-
nist. Then you had the L.A. Times which was intensely anticommunist, because they tended to equate all radicals with the McNamaras [John J. and James B.] who'd blown up their plant.

[Laughter]

But I remember it was amusing during the great Hollywood studio strike between the craft unions and the IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees]. The L.A. Times labor editor at the Times, a guy named [Joseph] Joe Park, and the L.A. Times gave coverage to the Hollywood studio labor troubles that was quite comprehensive and quite accurate and quite objective for an ironic reason. I think it went back to [Harrison] Harry Chandler, who warned the studios against getting involved with these damned labor unions. So here were the chickens coming home to roost and the L.A. Times was anxious to lay it out, just the way it was happening. Here were these squabbling labor unions tying up motion picture production. So stuff like the Brown and Bioff scandal

and that sort of thing, they ate that up and covered it quite comprehensively.

Writing for an Eastern Newspaper in California

VASQUEZ: Did you find doors closed to you, or did you have problems being that you represented or wrote for an eastern paper?

HILL: No, not a great deal. I'd say about 80, 90 percent of the relationships were fine because your news sources, in general, were impressed that the New York Times was on the scene and were flattered at the attention.

VASQUEZ: You weren't seen then as any kind of a threat?

HILL: No, that's right. The bureau was in the Los Angeles Times for fifteen years and I got along fine with the Los Angeles Times people, working in it. Otis Chandler, and maybe even Norman Chandler and some of the old guard there at the Times looked down their nose a little bit at me because, oh, I was from the East, I was from the New York Times, I was from Harvard and I wore bow ties. To some of those old-line people, that all practically added up to being a communist.

VASQUEZ: But you were a Republican. Did they know you were a Republican?

HILL: I don't think they did, no. [Laughter]

Key Political Figures in the Press: Earl Warren and Robert Kenny

VASQUEZ: Whom do you identify as key personalities, political personalities, in the state at that time? Earl Warren, obviously.

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: But apart from the governor?

HILL: Oh, [Robert W.] Bob Kenny, for one.

VASQUEZ: Why was he so significant?

HILL: Well, because he was a very astute man, extremely astute man--I think, probably, one of the most astute who was ever on the California political scene. And, of course, it was a good deal of his doing that Warren got as far ahead as he did.

VASQUEZ: Can you expand on that relationship between Bob Kenny and Earl Warren?

HILL: Well, they were good friends and. . . . God, I'd have to go back and look at Bob Kenny's memoirs to refresh my memory on some of the details of their relationship. But what it amounted to was that Kenny was instrumental in mobilizing and swinging the bipartisan vote that was so important in Warren's getting ahead.

V. ISSUES IN CALIFORNIA MEDIA POLITICS

Key Issues Covered in California Politics

VASQUEZ: Can you think of any particular issue or piece of legislation where that really comes out in relief? Because the Democrats were in the minority in the state legislature.

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: In California politics, as a whole.

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: But in certain key issues and certain key votes, they were necessary to be successful.

The Loyalty Oath Controversy

HILL: Yeah. Of course, the big issue that stands out in your mind was the loyalty oath controversy.

VASQUEZ: It's 1948?

HILL: [It] dragged on for so long and was so intense, I think, it had its roots in the legislature.

VASQUEZ: In part, it came out of the efforts of people like Jack Tenney and Sam Yorty . . .

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: . . . in their investigating committees. One of the offshoots of that was this question of a loyalty oath as a sort of a compromise.

Covering the Regents of the University of
California

HILL: I used to cover the [Board of] Regents [of the University of California] meetings regularly, the ones here and occasionally elsewhere. God, that hassle went on so long.

VASQUEZ: What was your impression of the university regents at the time, the caliber of people and the political capabilities?

HILL: Very impressive. I think more so at that time, perhaps, than in later years. I think because the whole thing was on so much smaller a scale, the university, the whole university operation and everything. Gosh, I suppose if you look back at the numbers and the dollars and everything involved, that the whole thing was on a--and the number of students, for that matter--was on a scale just a fraction of what it is now. So that correspondingly, the regents had a lot closer connection to everything and more immediate control.

They were a very imposing body. They maintained very detailed control over everything that went on in the university. I can remember

they had some kind of a by-law, or something like that, that something as insignificant as \$500 worth of shrubbery on a campus would have to be voted on by the board. And even a thing like giving a faculty member a ten-day leave to go to an international conference in Paris or something, would come before the board. The management was that detailed.

Of course, it got to kind of a foolish point where the operations of the university were so huge and complex that, you know, one day they had to take themselves by the scruff of the neck and say, "Look, we can't be spending our time on this chickenshit when there's so much bigger issues to be dealt with." And I think that sort of lag there, you know, may have been behind, somewhat, the student uproar in the sixties. They were so concerned with minutiae that they got out of touch with the meat of the coconut, which was the students that you were supposed to be educating.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Did you cover any of the hearings where members of the board, as well as faculty members, were called before the Tenney committee and harangued?

HILL: No. I don't recall anything like that, I don't think. But, to sort of typify the difference in these periods that I was speaking of, there was always a Hearst representative on the regents, and for years it was John Francis Neylan, a San Francisco lawyer. Then, in later years, it was [Catherine] "Bootsie" Hearst, who was a sort of Gracie Allen. And it used to fascinate me because you'd get this group of fairly sagacious men around a table there, and she had this marvelous knack for throwing the discussion off of the track.

I remember, I think it was when Reagan first came in and there was the big debate about raising tuition, which was all geared to the fact that the only thing that Reagan knew about tuition was what he'd experienced back at that little cow college in Illinois that he went to. And it was a cow college, too. I went back with him on one of his trips. Boy, it was a picture-book cow college. All these buildings from the 1890s. If you had given them a real building inspection, they wouldn't have been considered fit for use. [Laughter] Anyway, his mind was

geared to the economics of that little cow college there. So a big debate about raising the tuition went on meeting after meeting. But I remember at one meeting, they really were getting down to cases, and suddenly Mrs. Hearst popped up and said, "What about fees for graduate students from out of state?" And, of course, what she was talking about was about one tenthousandth of the budget. There weren't all that many graduate students from out of state and what they paid wasn't a drop in the bucket. But she'd chime in with something like that and the whole constructive discussion would be derailed. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Well, that still happens. [Laughter]

HILL: And I remember sitting there, thinking, "Good god, this is like the board of General Motors sitting around and arguing about the design of the door handles on Chevrolets." They were so occupied with minutiae for a long time.

VASQUEZ: So, apart from Bob Kenny and Earl Warren?

HILL: Oh, golly. A big figure was this fellow who was senator for so long. God, I should remember his name.

VASQUEZ: [Richard] Richards?

HILL: No, way before that.

VASQUEZ: Oh, senator at the national level?

HILL: Yeah, U.S. senator. His name was associated with the whole water picture so much.

VASQUEZ: Sheridan Downey.

HILL: Yeah. When he died, Knowland was appointed to replace him. Downey was a very big figure. God, I'll have to refresh my memory on some of these things.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Session 2, November 25, 1987]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

Political Journalism in the Sixties

VASQUEZ: Continuing our discussion of how journalism treated politics in the late 1940s, can you bring us up into the late sixties and how political coverage or political journalism changed in California?

HILL: Yeah, I think it's much more sophisticated now, because your reporters are more sophisticated and your audience is more sophisticated.

VASQUEZ: Where does that sophistication come from, say, from the forties, fifties, sixties?

HILL: Oh, I suppose from many sources. World War II was a watershed where you had Navaho Indians who had never been to Gallup [New Mexico], all of a sudden they were over in the Pacific and over in Japan, when they came home, and can you imagine the social impacts of exposure like that? You might apply it to millions of GI's. I think it was kind of a starting point in the change and then television came in and gave everybody in the country a different picture of how things were,

closer, more intimate pictures. Of course, television misrepresented a whole lot of things, like the "Ozzie and Harriet" ideal family, and never a bit of trouble or anything. But, it also conveyed accurately a lot of the realities of life.

I think this made people much more sophisticated. In the paper a story about a strike and maybe violence on a picket line, and it's really just words, as if it happened in medieval England. But you switch the box [TV] on, and you see some cop busting somebody's head with a club, or you see those police in Birmingham [Alabama] with the snarling dogs, and that gives you a far better picture of the realities of life than just the words on paper would. I think that sort of thing galvanizes people's minds. "Gee, who are these cops in Birmingham, that they are so nasty and use snarling dogs, and what legal right do they have to set these dogs on some dark-skinned people who happen to be there?"

Raising the Sophistication of the Reader

VASQUEZ: Is it a matter of "seeing is believing"?

HILL: I guess the catchphrase is that it "raised

everybody's consciousness." The media had to start answering questions that arose in people's minds. I think that's probably the basic change in how people get sophisticated. Whereas in the old mode of reporting, you'd say, "Well, candidate A said this, and candidate B said that," and no critical look at what they said at all. People started wanting more than this pro forma chronicle of what was going on in the world, plus the reportorial profession had changed, as I think I said before. I started out in a generation where you had legmen who were practically illiterate. They were good at gathering a few basic facts, but they had no educational background beyond maybe high school. Today, you practically have to be a college graduate and have some knowledge of nuclear physics and biology and mathematics and all sorts of things just to get by as a reporter.

The business of public sophistication during the current [United States] Supreme Court hoorah that has been going on, [Robert] Bork and [David] Ginsburg and whatnot. The thing that struck me was that it is a wonderful way to celebrate the

two hundredth anniversary of the [United States] Constitution. Here you had people all over the country--probably more people than not--who got exercised about constitutional questions. In what other country could you find that sort of awareness? I can't think of any.

VASQUEZ: And in what other period?

HILL: Yeah, there are not many countries that have a usable constitution that is set out in reasonably plain language the way ours is that people can refer to. And now it's a staple of the World Almanac; anybody who wants to look up the fine print can do it in there. I think that reflects a degree of sophistication that didn't exist when I was growing up. There was very little mention of the Constitution and it really didn't start concerning people, I guess, until about the New Deal, when a lot of constitutional questions arose.

Electronic Media versus the Printed Word

VASQUEZ: On this question of the media, of the intrusion of electronic media, to a certain degree, supplanting the written word to reach large numbers of people about political matters.

[Earl C.] "Squire" Behrens, in his oral history, castigates the early electronic media personalities that covered events in Sacramento. He argued that often they were more interested in good camera shots and looking good on TV and getting their stories in on time. They did very little of the investigative reporting and in-depth analysis. They would feed off the print journalists and then, basically, just get the pictures.

You were around and you saw that transformation. That is to say, you saw television and radio--but especially television--here in California take precedence over the printed media for political reporting. How would you assess that period?

HILL: I think those limitations that Squire talked about were true, and are true today. When I was speaking of television, I was thinking in sort of organic, macro terms, rather than your fine-detail stuff because I think a great deal of what television does, even in the news field, is pretty bad and pretty inadequate, terribly inadequate. But still, even a little bit of truth is better than

none. But you can see television's cavalier attitude. I think all the Los Angeles TV stations, or principal ones, had bureaus in Sacramento, and all but maybe one have closed down. Because that challenge of conveying the real news, even if it wasn't particularly graphic or photogenic, just became too expensive in the economics of broadcasting.

The Constraints of Commercial Broadcasting

VASQUEZ: Talking about economics, some attribute the poor coverage of news to the fact that it is commercially determined. That is to say, that the news broadcasting, like the entertainment, has a bottom line and consequently, profit and ratings, rather than objectivity or in-depth reporting, is what determines the quality of the product. Do you agree with that?

HILL: Yes. Oh, absolutely. And I think the only face-saving thing in television's favor is that it's a medium of communication that has only been in existence about forty years, which is fairly young. But I think, you know, one of the great tragedies of our time is the way it has failed to develop and really exercise the essential power

that it has to reach people, that it has been all in the crummy terms of "which soap opera pays off the better." Because their standard excuse on television. . . . Well, they say, in effect, that they are captives of the advertisers. Well, hell, a newspaper exists on advertising, too. But newspapers aren't 90 percent comic strips, which is what TV is. But I think you're starting to see the beginnings of a reaction to that, that myopia on the part of the television biggies, the networks. Ted Turner comes along and puts in an all-news network. And, as near as you can figure from [Laughter] his complicated bookkeeping, apparently the thing is making money every year-- or at least breaking even, or he wouldn't have continued it this long. And lately, the last few days, there have been rumors that NBC [National Broadcasting Company] was interesting in buying him out, you know. So he comes along, and then cable comes along with something other than the network fare. And, of course, public television comes along with something better than network television fare. You see network television suffering a steady erosion in its audience. So

that may be the wholesome reaction that sets in. Then we maybe make some progress that way.

Overconcentration of Media Ownership

VASQUEZ: Do you think there is an overconcentration of ownership of the airwaves . . .

HILL: Yeah, I think that maybe the three big networks are going the same way that Detroit did with automobiles, getting so tunnel-visioned and myopic that they're losing touch with their market. That is what happened with everything in Detroit. General Motors people never talked to anybody but General Motors people.

VASQUEZ: And you better have the right answer . . . ?

HILL: Intellectual incest, carried on long enough, leads to insanity.

VASQUEZ: And drives people like John [Z.] DeLorean out? The creativity and the innovation. . .

HILL: And sucks people like the Japanese and the Germans in. A vacuum to be filled.

The Camera and the Politician

VASQUEZ: Now, electronic media provide us with a camera that supposedly doesn't lie, it gives you the opportunity to see people and to see through people. Some say that it brings the individual,

the personality of the political player or actor, into the view and in contact with more people than ever before.

On the other hand, if you become astute enough at performing for that camera, you can become an image whose substance no one really knows. On balance, have electronic media surpassing print media for mass consumption been good or bad for California politics?

Complementing Print and Electronic Media

HILL: No, I think the two media still are complementary to each other. Television brings graphic elements that flesh out what you read on the printed page; and then the printed page gives you nuts and bolts that you can't get from a series of pictures. I don't think because people in the political world can essentially deceive the public, that they can do that for very long. Prolonged exposure is going to reveal people for what they really are.

VASQUEZ: Give me an example.

HILL: The fact, for instance, that the White House manipulates TV and arranges and stages things to hit the evening news. Well, I don't think it is

very long before people realize that they are being manipulated on that, and that Reagan dedicating a dam, visiting a factory, or something like that, intrinsically, is not very meaningful, it's show biz. I know that you can't fool many of the people for very long.

VASQUEZ: You think that was part of Richard Nixon's problem?

HILL: Oh, yeah, very much, because, no matter how he sliced it, he came across as a cold personality. Somebody that nobody could get close to.

VASQUEZ: Do you think it will ultimately affect Ronald Reagan that way?

HILL: No, because he's had this extraordinarily ingratiating personality. All the surveys, all the polls indicate that people may think he is inept, and maybe even incompetent in some respects, and has made a lot of mistakes, but they still like him as a person. Of course, the danger being that liking somebody as a person, you can get too far away from assessing what they do.

California Politicians Most Successful in their
Use of Media

VASQUEZ: Who do you think has been the most successful politician in the last thirty years in California in handling or using the press?

HILL: In the last thirty years? It would be sort of a photo finish amongst Reagan and maybe the two Browns, I mean [Edmund G., Jr.] Jerry and [Edmund G., Sr.] Pat, and Because the fact is that anybody who naturally has a warm personality usually projects it pretty well over television. Not that Jerry Brown had a warm personality, rather forbidding in some ways, but he still has a likable quality.

VASQUEZ: Sincerity?

HILL: Came across. Yeah, earnestness, and the fact that he was knowledgeable.

VASQUEZ: Who do you think has been the least effective?

HILL: Oh, gosh, there's a whole world of them.

Jesse Unruh and the Media Image

VASQUEZ: Let me give you a name of someone that was never able to overcome his image no matter how much weight he lost, and that was [Assembly Speaker] Jesse [M.] Unruh.

HILL: Yeah, Jesse was an interesting study. I don't think TV ever did him very much good. He had a real fundamental problem which was rarely, if ever, remarked upon, and that was that he was in Sacramento by virtue of a very small constituency, which was Inglewood, and of course he was a supreme political technician. He knew the anatomy and dynamics of politics better than probably anybody around. But he never extended his grass-roots support much beyond Inglewood. So that the crunches came when he ran for statewide office. He was standing there empty-handed, and it was only when he ran for the obscure office of state treasurer that he finally managed to win. I think that was the first statewide election that he ever won.

VASQUEZ: And he did it on just a postcard campaign?

HILL: Yeah, but nobody remarked about, and I have seen him on campaign occasions, when he was addressing large groups of living, breathing citizens and voters, and he was very uncomfortable with them. I think he had this sense that they were not on his wavelength in terms of political techniques at all, that he was like a diesel

engineer talking to a kindergarten class.

Unruh as a Political Campaigner

VASQUEZ: You think he was better on one-to-one, or small groups?

HILL: Yes. In terms of political astuteness, wisdom, he should have been governor a long time back.

VASQUEZ: Why do you think that never happened?

HILL: Well, because there was a blind spot he had, of never building a grass-roots base.

VASQUEZ: What other politicians in California history that you think should have gone a lot further than they did, especially if the press was involved in that?

HILL: Oh, I don't know. I think that Nixon could have made the governorship of California if he had done it right. But, of course, he developed what I call the "Potomac myopia." He completely lost touch with what was going on back here, so when he came back to campaign he didn't know what he was talking about.

The Danger of "Potomac Myopia"

Of course, [William F.] Bill Knowland was a guy who might have gone a lot farther than he did, I think. In Dancing Bear I gave him as a

prime example of "Potomac myopia." I don't think Knowland was terribly bright to begin with. He picked up a lot of the rudiments of politics along the way, but I think his was almost a "stage mother" situation where old [Joseph] Joe Knowland was the puppeteer pulling the strings. Bill had his father as kind of a monkey on his back all his career. Again, he lost touch with the grass roots when he was campaigning against Pat Brown. He would give a big, long fifteen-hundred-, two-thousand-word speech on tariffs, or some dull subject. He would try to cover all the problems in a big, long speech and simply baffle everybody. Pat would keep a speech down to about five hundred words, a couple of pages, and hit one topic so you remembered it, people remembered it.

VASQUEZ: How about somebody like [Senator Thomas H.] Tom Kuchel? Do you think the press helped or hindered his political career?

HILL: Oh, yes, I think the press helped him a lot. He was just ultimately kind of a victim of circumstance, he got caught in that [Superintendent of Public Instruction Maxwell L.] Rafferty [Jr.]

logjam, but I'm sure he was helped by the media generally because he projected a charismatic personality. He was a little on the shy side, but he had a good sense of politics too. He was a kind of a victim of that California political meat grinder where you can get chewed up one day and you're through.

California Politicians and a National Image

VASQUEZ: Do you think California voters find it an asset for a politician to have high-profile relations or nationwide connections?

HILL: Most of the indications I think are that people compartmentalize state and national politics in their minds. I think [Senator Alan] Cranston made that funny little run of his for president primarily just to build up his exposure at the California level, to give him a little impetus. Well, it couldn't do him any harm; what it did was keep his name in the headlines and give him a little stature and prestige because he had been in Washington long enough that a lot of people had forgotten he existed.

VASQUEZ: On the other hand, somebody like Pierre Salinger couldn't translate the Kennedy magic into

political capital here in California.

HILL: Absolutely, right, he just banged into a stone wall.

VASQUEZ: Why?

HILL: Well, he was very much of a carpetbagger.

VASQUEZ: Was he always perceived as that?

HILL: Yeah.

VI. CHANGES IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS

The Reasons for the Democratic Success of 1958

VASQUEZ: Let's talk a little bit about the changes that have taken place in California politics. To what do you attribute the fortunes of the Democrats between 1947-1957? In one short decade they go from being a minority party at every level, in both legislative houses, in the executive branch, to the sweep of 1958.

HILL: Yeah, they overcame all the Hiram Johnson constraints on political organization by forming the California Democratic Council, as a kind of rallying point where there had been nothing before. Of course, it didn't pretend to represent the views of all the Democrats in California, but it was a rallying point to get them off of that dead center where they were just

an unorganized mob. But, you know, I think basically Californians are liberal in their actions. Whereas before the 1940s, it had been a pioneer situation where a fairly small coterie of influential people ran things, the Democrats coming up was really a case of water seeking its own level.

The Impact of Ballot Party Designation

VASQUEZ: Do you think abolishing cross-filing helped the Democrats?

HILL: Oh, yes, yes. Because I think today the majority of people still came from out of state, cross-filing was completely confusing to everybody, especially before they put the party-label requirements in.

Explaining the Rightward Shift in California
Politics after 1966

VASQUEZ: To what would you attribute then, that roller coaster ride when after '66, the Democrats take a nose dive and we got a conservative Republican period?

HILL: I think the national situation influenced that, [President Lyndon B.] Johnson left office because of the Vietnam War disaster and politics move in

cycles or in waves that you can plot pretty well. Particularly in a loose state like California, a regime wins and they get in, and after they have been in a fairly short time, ten years or so, wearing out their welcome because the roots of their support are so shallow. You know, on the state level you don't have any great clash of ideologies, rival ideologies that you can put up as rallying points. And you have this nonpartisan tradition in local and county offices, a lack of political machinery, so the support for any regime is going to wither away fairly soon.

Governor Brown's Unsuccessful Reelection Campaign
in 1966

VASQUEZ: Is that what happened to Pat Brown?

HILL: I think Pat might have beaten Reagan, but the big thing that was missing from Pat's campaign was that although he had worked very hard and accomplished a lot of things, he was sort of sitting back and getting his breath, rather than coming up with some forward-looking stuff. His campaign was almost a passive one in that respect. He has acknowledged that to me in conversations we had.

He didn't have anything new to offer people, and people were getting tired of the Lyndon Johnson type of thing, and the poverty programs, and of course right there in the mid-sixties you had some economic recession and so along comes this nice fellow that everybody knew from radio and the movies, with this war cry of economy and antigovernment rhetoric, with a virtual vacuum on the Brown side, why he walked away with it.

VASQUEZ: Do you think had Brown's campaign been handled differently, he would have been more successful?

HILL: Somebody would have had to have gotten to him about two years before and said, "Look, Pat you've got to start thinking about what merchandise you're going to be peddling in two years from now, and think up a program, new frontiers to deal with, and you have got to take a real sensitive feel of public sentiment and see what things they are dissatisfied with and see how to counteract those." I don't think he had the people around him to do that, people like [Frederick G.] Freddie Dutton, who had been one of the masterminds of his earlier years. Dutton had gone on to Washington to be a high-powered

lobbyist for the Arabs, and so Pat was lacking in guidance like that.

VASQUEZ: He came back to work on the campaign, but it was already under way under someone else's stewardship, and then there was a conflict there.

HILL: Yeah, and it could have been that no matter how perceptive advisers might have been, Pat would have taken the advice.

Ronald Reagan's Appeal in 1966

VASQUEZ: Why do you think that Reagan's appeal to the voters was as a "citizen-governor" rather than a "politician-governor," why did that seem to strike such a responsive chord?

HILL: Well, I think people were just fed up with politicians.

VASQUEZ: Do you think it was a reaction to the War on Poverty, all the different programs, that people saw that as bureaucracy?

HILL: Yeah, that and the "tax and spend," "tax and spend" ethos. I think the public anticipated history. The momentum of the New Deal and the welfare state had carried on for an awful long time after [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt. Partly because World War II, in a sense, was a

hiatus, an intermission, when people didn't think about ideology and money didn't mean anything. But you figure by the 1970s the New Deal philosophy, the welfare-state philosophy, had been in power about forty years on pretty much of a gung ho basis. "We've got a problem, well, let's throw some money at it." It was just about inevitable that along the way people would start saying, "Gee, let's start balancing the books here, let's see the cost effectiveness of a lot of what we're doing," and of course, a lot of the aspects of the welfare state by that time had gotten pretty inefficient and wasteful. So Reagan could get up and tell these anecdotes about governmental waste, and people said, "Gee, he's right."

VASQUEZ: Yet his budget, when he left office was several times larger than any state budget ever.

HILL: Yeah. Of course, he could blame that on inflation in general, the fact that he had to spend more dollars to get the same result. Entitlement programs, which were growing in California just the way they were nationally, kept growing even though there were now more

humans involved, which meant more and more money. Also, I think, in both state and national politics--and people are not really waking up to it yet--the minute you launch a governmental program, you set up a bureaucracy which has a vested interest in perpetuating that program, no matter how good or bad it is.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

Perpetuating Too Many Government Programs

You know, it is the nature of human beings to eat, they have to hold jobs, and so a fellow gets in a government job, in a program, he doesn't want to see himself put out of a job any more than a guy who is working in a widget factory wants to see the widget factory close down. So he's going to, as decent and honest as he may be, do everything on earth to keep that program going, irrespective of its merits. I think that over a period of time, between the New Deal and the mid-seventies, in an awful lot of governmental programs, the emphasis shifted to perpetuating the program rather than what it was actually accomplishing. People became aware of

that and there is a reaction, and they said,
"Throw the rascals out."

VASQUEZ: That's part of what you think Reagan was able to
capitalize on?

HILL: Yeah, I think so.

The Pendulum of Politics

VASQUEZ: All right, why did California politics then go
from a Ronald Reagan to a Jerry Brown?

HILL: Well, because--

VASQUEZ: And are they that different?

HILL: Yeah, I think at that point in time Reagan in
effect was saying, "Gee, let's turn the clock
back to that comfortable Norman Rockwell era."
Which was a good pitch for a while. But then I
think people have a natural inclination to want
to move on, to pioneer, to improve, and so Jerry
came along with all of his high-flying ideas, and
I think it just grabbed people. I don't think
the party labels meant all that much. I think if
Jerry had been a Republican he might have done
just as well.

VASQUEZ: Is that right? What then explains going from
Brown to [Governor George S.] Deukmejian?

HILL: Well, the same thing, again. People got a huge

dose of blue-skying from Jerry and were ready to just settle back and have a little peace and quiet in government for awhile, a shift of mood. That, I think is the main thing that Deukmejian has offered people. I mean, Jerry's regime had been very exciting in many ways, if only subconsciously exciting, like people have been roistering at a big party or something, and after awhile they were ready to go home and rest for awhile. It is the big thing that Deukmejian has given them. God knows he is not very imaginative, and he is certainly not colorful. He has given them stability so people can just turn away and forget about what is happening in Sacramento, and figure, "Well, we've got a good caretaker up there. We know this guy isn't going to come up with any "wild blue sky" schemes for spending money and raising taxes." It fits the mood of the time. See, this thing sort of goes in ten-year cycles, eight-year cycles, like that.

The Journalist's Role in Periodic Political Shifts

VASQUEZ: And in those political shifts of mood, what role do journalists play? Do they mainly report it,

do they help to shape it, or a little bit of both?

HILL: Well, I think they help shape it by reporting it.

VASQUEZ: Are journalists social mirrors then?

HILL: Yes.

VASQUEZ: Or social consciences?

HILL: I think so. Journalists have no franchise to guide anything or make judgments about what's good for society, at least not in the news columns. Over in the editorial columns, that's their job, to make judgments and assess things. But on the working-news side of journalism if you do your job right, it is all you can do to pull together the relevant facts in a situation in time for tomorrow's paper. Even if you had inclinations to shape society, which is rare, that isn't the nature of the reportorial beast; you wouldn't have time to exercise them. There are automatic brakes in the process when the fellow puts into a news story any kind of body-English in the way he reports things. Some editor is going to spot it and raise an objection, because newspapers know that they are being read by all kinds of people. If they lean at all in one

direction, they are going to get squawks from the other direction, so you do everything you can to avoid the heat.

The force of what reporters do, and probably the greatest power there is, is lay the facts before people so that they can form their judgments. No newspapers in the news columns said [Senator] Gary Hart ought to be kicked out of the presidential race. What happened there is that his shenanigans were laid out in black and white and his financing sources dried up. The people with the money said, "This is a risky thing to bet on," and he was finished.

How Thorough Should Coverage of Political Candidates Be?

VASQUEZ: There is a debate as to how much we should know about political candidates. Do you think it is the role of the press to ferret out every fact, every indiscretion, and bring it forth?

HILL: Yeah, I think so. The basic rule you go by in reporting is, "What would people be interested in?" A good deal of the time, when you're reporting you are simply acting as a proxy for the readers. When you are covering an automobile

accident, if a reader could be here, what would he have seen, what would he be interested in? And that's what you write down in your notes. What questions would be raised, why was the car coming down the street on the left-hand side, was there any reason that it should have been going fifty miles an hour in a thirty-five-mile-an-hour zone, or whatever. You are on the scene as a representative of the reader, and so the eternal question is what would the reader be interested in. I think in most of the Gary Hart coverage, there was no implication in the stories that a judgment was made whether this was moral or immoral.

VASQUEZ: Why did he get caught?

HILL: People would be interested to know that this fellow who had purportedly had the benign domestic life was playing around with demimonde women. And you know, I think twenty people out of twenty, you put it to them and said, "Do you think the public would be interested in knowing that?" they'd say, "Yes."

VASQUEZ: Let me ask you a speculative question. If it had been public knowledge that [President] John [F.]

Kennedy had a flair for women other than his wife, as now we all know as common knowledge, do you think that it would have been to his great detriment after he was in office?

HILL: After he was in office. . . . You know that means sneaking people in and out of side doors at the White House.

VASQUEZ: There was a recent TV program, "Hoover versus the Kennedys" that had never been aired on television before.

HILL: I didn't see it.

VASQUEZ: They overemphasized the philandering, I think, but what comes through in even a public program like that are the political weaknesses and the political vulnerabilities of human wants and human frailties.

HILL: Of course, public standards have shifted--changed a great deal in our time. I did some looking back at opinion surveys for a piece I was writing for the USC [University of Southern California] business magazine, and the theme of it was changing standards. Not too many years ago, if you polled people and asked them about couples living together before they were married you got

an overwhelming vote in opposition to it. And no more than ten or fifteen years later, maybe not even that much, maybe ten years or less, the thing shifted around just the other way.

Similarly, there have been changes in views on abortion and birth control, things like that, all sorts of moral questions. So, since [President] Herbert Hoover's time there have been profound changes in what the public has considered acceptable.

Assessing Small-Town California Newspapers

VASQUEZ: Tell me, you had an opportunity to look at the coverage that not only the major metropolitan newspapers here in California give to politics, but you have some sense of the coverage that smaller local papers around the state give. What is your assessment? How much importance would you place at the local level, on the kind of attention and coverage that local newspapers in California give politics?

HILL: You have to generalize that in smaller communities, the coverage is pretty parochial. It is focused on the interests of a particular area rather than big-picture stuff; and in your big papers, it is

different, it is far more comprehensive--with some qualifications. In the last couple of months for instance, the Los Angeles Times has had stories about state party conventions where they told quite a bit about the enactments or votes, or that kind of thing, pronouncements. But in two of those stories that I read, nowhere did the writer mention where the convention was held.

I consider that very inadequate coverage. When I read a story about a state party convention I want to know whether the thing was in a warehouse or a bowling alley or a church, how the place was decorated, how many people attended, what their general frame of mind was, things like that. Those details didn't appear in these stories I read.

I wrote a letter to [William] Bill Thomas at the Los Angeles Times about one of these stories, about how inadequate it was conveying a picture. We go back to my precept that every reporter should be the eyes and ears of the reader on the scene, so that coverage of state politics I think is far from flawless. But I think the same thing

probably could be said about the New York Times's coverage of what goes on in Albany [New York]. I don't read it that closely because I am profoundly uninterested in it, but in the old days the [New York] Times had a great correspondent in Albany called [James] Jim Haggerty. He was the father of young [James] Jim Haggerty [Jr.], who was Eisenhower's press secretary. And old Jim Haggerty really covered what was happening in Albany and gave you some color and detail.

VASQUEZ: Which are some of the better local newspapers in California in terms of the political coverage?

HILL: Well, one of the best that I remember running across in the [California Magazine] survey, and both Ben Bagdikian, one year, and I, the next year, gave it some of the highest marks of any-- it was the Hemet News, if you can believe that. But the San Diego papers I think are quite good now, the Copley papers down there, and the, of course the Orange County Register, San Bernardino Sun.

Influential California Newspapers

VASQUEZ: In the fifties and sixties which papers were the most politically significant in the state?

Obviously the Los Angeles Times.

HILL: Yeah, the [San Francisco] Examiner and the [San Francisco] Chronicle in San Francisco, and the Bee papers.

VASQUEZ: What made those papers so good?

HILL: Well, the editors had the insight to focus a lot of attention and you made sure there was good coverage.

Comparing Political Coverage Around the Country

VASQUEZ: Do you find a difference in the way that politics is covered, say in California, as compared to New York, Wisconsin, places in the Midwest, or the East Coast? Is there as much interest in politics and political themes in California as there is in most places?

HILL: Yeah, I think there's as much or more. I read the New York Times every day, but I don't get much of a feel about the political realm in New York state. Reading the Los Angeles Times and [Los Angeles] Herald Examiner, pretty much day to day, I get a feel of what's going on. Hardly a day goes by that there isn't a story about what the governor's up to, and when the legislators are meeting. Of course, every day there's a

story about that, and then there are sidebars. In one respect, at least they are way ahead of where they were, and that is investigative reporting, looking into campaign contributions and lobbying activity, etc.

The Advent of In-depth Political Reporting in California Newspapers

VASQUEZ: If you were to place a date, and of course one can't do it precisely, when that kind of in-depth reporting and analysis begins to make itself noticeable in the press in California, when would that be?

HILL: I don't know just when it came in. We probably broke out of the old mold I guess kind of a benchmark would be when Pat Brown first came in and got everybody in the state excited over the water thing. That was a real state wide question, and it raised the consciousness of everybody, including the media, about statewide affairs. That question, of course, was brought right down to the ballot on bond issues.

VASQUEZ: Do you think maybe the print media began to do analyses, background reporting, and investigative reporting in part as a reaction to the headway that

television was making as a competitor?

HILL: Oh, yes.

News Coverage of Budgetary Politics in California

VASQUEZ: Let's get a sense of change over time in a number of important processes in California politics. As an observer and writer, at least since the late forties you have seen things develop over time. You mentioned that you think they come in waves, more or less; some use the metaphor of a pendulum in politics. The budgetary process here in California, how budgets are put together and how they become such an important part of the political struggle, what do you have to say about that?

HILL: Well, of course, that's the umbilical cord between the citizens and the government--the money. I don't think the average voter watches the numbers very closely or compares one year to another. It is when it suddenly hits him in the pocketbook with another tax or big increase in his income taxes, sales taxes, or whatever. The regimes that have been in in our time have obviously kept governmental expenditures within plausible bounds, except for the property tax thing. One of the interesting evolutions has been a legislature

being cowardly about some of the things that concern the public, property taxes being the most prominent thing. But even a thing like the coastal regulation and the legislature year after year balking at coming to grips with these things and then people like Howard Jarvis or the Sierra Club coming in with coastal initiatives and people rising up and taking the power from the legislature the way [Governor] Hiram Johnson anticipated.

The Howard Jarvis Crusade

VASQUEZ: Was Howard Jarvis inevitable?

HILL: No, I think it was an historic moment when you had a situation that cried out for remedy and a personality to lead the crusade just happened to be on hand.

[Interruption]

You were asking about Jarvis. He was just a propitious personality because he had been around long enough, he knew the way politics worked, and he was an extremely articulate guy and could put his message in plain, down-to-earth terms that people could understand. A real case of personality influencing history. And if he hadn't been there, I don't know what would have happened,

somebody else might have mounted a campaign because the crunches from the property tax were becoming so acute. But, it wouldn't have been as dramatic or effective or as quick as with Jarvis.

VASQUEZ: So you attribute the tax revolt to the perception of the public of what, government mismanagement?

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: Because it seemed to have to do a lot with perceptions.

HILL: Yeah, and the fact that there were intrinsic injustices in the system, like elderly fixed-income people getting squeezed.

VII. THE CONTEMPORARY CALIFORNIA POLITICAL SCENE

The Initiative in California Politics

VASQUEZ: Probably no state in the union uses the initiative as much as California does. Do you see that as a positive sign of democratic awareness, of democratic participation in the system?

HILL: Yeah, I think so.

VASQUEZ: Or do you see it as something that has become the bailiwick of those who can mount an initiative drive and get the number of signatures and pay the right PR [public relations] firms?

HILL: I think it is a sound institution and I don't think it has been abused in that way because if somebody has a good cause, a plausible cause like Jarvis did, I don't think you have much problem in raising whatever money is necessary to further the cause.

VASQUEZ: Can you think of any initiative that was a real fraud or a real waste of time?

HILL: Well, of course, the famous "Ham and Eggs" [movement] was wildly impractical, and people voted it in. But fortunately, under the system, they were able to vote it right out again when it was shown to be impractical, so marvelous is the elasticity in the system.

VASQUEZ: It's one of its positive aspects. Do you think that there will be more of that? Let me put it this way, do you think that an increased number of initiatives and referenda signal a greater awareness of the political process on the part of the public? Are they barometers of political concern on the part of the public?

HILL: I think so, yeah.

Expanding Media Influence in California Politics

VASQUEZ: I think you made some comments about it, but let me

ask you more directly and more narrowly here.

What has the impact of an expanding media presence for politics in California?

HILL: Oh, I think inevitably it's improved them. Legislators and bureaucrats are under more scrutiny than ever now, more constant scrutiny, and more obvious too, so they watch their p's and q's more.

VASQUEZ: And yet, whether you are in Sacramento or you are out of Sacramento, when talking to political observers they claim that there is a lot more buying and selling going of legislators in Sacramento now than there was a few years ago.

HILL: Well, yeah, because the electoral system has gone haywire in this business of campaign contributions, as it has nationally, and we are headed for trouble and grief and reform on that.

Public Campaign Financing

VASQUEZ: What is your assessment of the argument for public campaign finance? You have someone for example like Jesse Unruh who was the master at getting money from just about anywhere that he needed to to finance his campaigns. Yet in his later years he came to the conclusion that

probably the best thing for good honest politics would be public campaign financing.

HILL: Yeah, I'm all for it, I think it's an inevitability too, it's such a basic thing. It's one of those things [which] will take a long time to change, and we will have to have a growing number of atrocities and anomalies before people get excited enough to do something about it.

VASQUEZ: But isn't it until there's a scandal?

HILL: The media have started turning the spotlight on this, and organizations like Common Cause have been toying with it, but it takes a long time for the realities of a thing like that to penetrate down to the guy who is preoccupied with his wife and kids and job and mortgage and car payments.

Special Interest Influences in California
Politics

VASQUEZ: In that connection, do you think that lobbyists, well, let's say special interests, have more access to power in the California political process than they did in the past?

HILL: Possibly, just because of the complexity of the whole business. It's this bigness thing again. So much is going on in Sacramento and the bureau-

cracy has become so complex that you're at an big advantage if you know your way or if you can hire someone who knows their way around. You know what they say for instance, about school textbooks. That if you want to market a school textbook in California, the first thing you do is go out and hire someone in Sacramento that knows how to carry the proposition through all of those [committee] chairs that it has to go through. So yeah, when government gets more complex, it's harder for the little individual citizen to exert his weight.

The California Power Elite

VASQUEZ: In California, the aircraft industry and some of the other technologically oriented industries have basically become defense industries. And in many cases, they are quite powerful in certain parts of the state, West Los Angeles, Silicon Valley, places like that.

Some people refer to the power elite in this state as the military-industrial-academic-complex. Is that a fair assessment? Let me just expand on it. There is presently a debate over the focus of the University of California,

Davis's agricultural economics department. The kind of research that it does, the kind of technology it develops, is perhaps skewed too much to big corporate agriculture to the detriment of the family farm. The same kind of argument is often made about the focus that some academic institutions place on grants and monies related to defense. This "California military-industrial complex," do you think there is such a thing?

HILL: Well, I think you have got two things there. On the agricultural side, you have to look at the fact that campuses like [University of California] Davis and Riverside were engendered and created largely by agricultural interests, so naturally they are going to exert whatever influence they can. But when it became too much, why, there's a kind of automatic adjustment mechanism that goes into effect.

Like now you have people crying that Davis is too much under the influence of the grape growers. On the part of the defense industry they are so Washington oriented that I think any danger to the public welfare is on the Washington end

rather than at the Sacramento. All the strings are pulled from Washington on that, and they in turn, pull the strings on Sacramento. I don't get a feel that they exercise undue influence in state affairs.

The Decline of Quality Education in California

VASQUEZ: There's another area, it's not at the higher-education level, although it involves it. Forty years ago, definitely thirty years ago, California was ranked as one of the best educational systems in the country. To the degree that education, what is taught, and how much money is spent is a political issue in this state, how have you seen the debate develop in the last twenty years?

HILL: My impression is that for years the relationship between the university and the legislature, say the state government, was a very placid thing. For one thing, the university was so much smaller than it is now. But then the university started getting awful big and the budget started getting big. Then in the sixties you had the hippie uprising which got the legislators kind of excited about what was going on at the

university. Even in the fifties, you had the loyalty oath controversy.

So that placidness that existed before was gone with the wind. Then you had Reagan coming in with his rustic economic concepts about financing the university, and that changed things. My impression is that University of California [President] Clark [E.] Kerr in a lot of ways had abrasive relations with Sacramento because he was an outspoken guy. So the general atmosphere, the ambiance, is quite different from what it was in the easygoing, old days. But it seems to me that University of California [President David P.] Gardner has been a very steady hand at the helm, and he seems to be getting along quite well with Sacramento. He is a forceful and knowledgeable enough individual that if he was having any trouble, he wouldn't have any problem putting it before the public. Of course, all the focus has switched to [Superintendent of Education William] Honig and the lower educational levels. So now, all the hassling is in the lower levels.

The Role of Politics in California's Educational
Decline

VASQUEZ: How much has politics had to do with the decline in the quality of California's educational system, kindergarten through 12?

HILL: I don't think very much. I think everybody is dissatisfied with lower education nationally, and I think it is a professional matter, rather than a political matter.

VASQUEZ: You don't think that having the educational system being politicized, being made a political issue has hurt it? Do you think that's just so much smoke?

HILL: I think where politics comes into this thing is primarily on money and budget appropriations. I don't think money is the big factor in quality of education. I think it is the people you have in it and the standards that are held. Poor standards for both teachers and administrators and students. Somehow, we have just lapsed into lower standards than we would like to have, right across the board. I think you would agree you don't get educational quality just by pouring money in.

Nonpartisanship in California's Recent Political
History

VASQUEZ: That's true. California's penchant for non-partisanship politics, how has that changed or has it changed in forty years?

HILL: No, I don't think it has changed, because I think it's the reasonable, logical thing. I think intensely partisan politics started, I guess, with [Thomas] Jefferson.

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

VASQUEZ: Is it something that will be revived in California, has it been in the last twenty, thirty years?

HILL: Yeah, I don't think it's much more pronounced in a statewide way. You get little clots, like [Congressman Howard L.] Berman/[Congressman Henry A.] Waxman's so-called machine here, which I don't think is all that influential, all that powerful. They win some and they lose some. Or you get like a Diane Feinstein machine in San Francisco.

But in terms of real party organization where you get voters to rally around a flag, an ideological flag especially, the partisan

differences are no more accentuated now than they were. I think the electorate by and large, people have the consensus and are agreed pretty much on the same things.

What you have an accentuation of, I think, is the citizenry in general versus special interest groups. The building trades, organized labor--entities like that--move in to try and get bigger slices of the pie where it may not be in the general public interest. Then the public responds in one way or another.

The Failure of Third-Party Efforts in California

VASQUEZ: If nonpartisan politics in the sense that we usually understand it between the Republicans and Democrats has been so nonessential, why has there not been a plethora of third, fourth, fifth parties? Why have efforts at such movements been so unsuccessful or had such limited success?

HILL: Well, to form an organization, you've got to have a purpose. Jarvis had a very distinct, well-defined purpose. So he was able to pull together a powerful political force. But in terms of getting the electorate to be cohesive, you've got to have some kind of standard, a rallying flag or

something, that you have to define. Nobody has been defining any.

VASQUEZ: And has it got to be broader than just one issue?

HILL: Yeah. In the real olden days, looking in national terms, it was kind of the haves versus the have-nots, the rich versus the poor. But that cleavage, one way or the other, has been steadily erased. You have that situation on the national level now, too, where people complain that more and more of the activities in Washington are strings being pulled by single-interest groups--environmentalists or the steel industry or whatever--and that out of that doesn't come a good result in terms of the general welfare. Like a whole lot of mice nibbling at the edge of a pie. They haven't solved that problem at the national level. I think it's getting worse, and it is probably reflected somewhat at the state level.

Again, the case of the size, the bigness, and the complexity of political machinery. The single interest can focus and find its way through the governmental maze, find out what strings to pull, what buttons to push, who are the key people to influence, and that way they

get what they want. It's only through the upsurge of organizations like Common Cause, or Norman Lear's People for the American Way that was in the forefront of the anti-Bork campaign. Of course, they in a way were a single-interest group out to defeat Bork.

The Value of Party Organization

VASQUEZ: If there is so much atomization by issue and by special interests, of what value are the political parties that we know today?

HILL: Oh, I think for practical purposes, as organizations, the political parties don't exist. They're just letterheads.

VASQUEZ: Is it a tradition we just don't want to let go of?

HILL: Well, nobody seems very enthusiastic about them.

VASQUEZ: Well, there are some people that are. And that leads me to the next question that I'm asking you. People like Jesse Jackson who take the Democratic party seriously, is doing all that a good Democrat is supposed to do, out registering voters, while the Democratic party seems intent on turning its back on him and not really taking him seriously. Do you have a comment on that?

HILL: Yeah, of course, you know the Democrats have been afflicted now for years with this fractionalization with the single-interest groups. Somebody like Jackson comes along and he drapes himself with a mantle of a name like the Democratic party, but I don't think it means much.

VASQUEZ: So, in essence, the parties are not disciplined organizations so much as they are shifting alliances?

HILL: Right. I think it is even exaggerating to call them skeletons of what they used to be; I think they are mainly letterheads. And mailing lists.

California's Ethnic Diversity in Politics

VASQUEZ: [Laughs] Right. One of the most pronounced aspects of California social and political life in the last forty years has been its diversity of ethnic and racial groups in the state, and of the sizable growth of several of those groups. What do you think that has done to California politics? What do you see in the future?

HILL: I don't think the rise of the ethnic groups has had a great deal of perceptible impact, so far. I mean, you're starting to get it on the Los Angeles City Council, for instance. But, for

instance, the Asian influx. Those people are so preoccupied with making a living, getting an economic foothold, that I don't think they worry too much about conventional politics. It's interesting, I think the biggest Asian group in California still is the Filipinos, who have been here for several generations and they still aren't recognized as any kind of political force, and have not given any indication of wanting to be.

So I think that the impact of this influx has been something that has yet to come. It's going to come along later. And, of course, you get the Latinos here in Los Angeles, they are starting to exert some muscle. Of course, in your home state, New Mexico, Latinos have on a statewide basis been practically running the place for a long time, or have been very, very influential. They really integrated into the political mechanism. But I think that New Mexico situation is almost unique.

Divisions in the Latino Community

VASQUEZ: It is.

HILL: But across the region as a whole, I think you get

that problem that you get two Latinos together, you get three political parties. You get three together, and you get four parties. The problem is cohesiveness. And it is probably getting worse because you're getting these economic strata, particularly in your Latino population where so many of them have gotten a good economic foothold. I get the feeling they are not too interested in the guy who came across the border last week and his problems any more than you would get the same consideration with Anglos.

When I said you get several Latinos together and you get a lot of conflicting points of view, I know of my son's wife's family from Sacramento, they have eight children. One side of the family goes back for several--at least three--generations in California. On my daughter-in-law's father's side, he was an immigrant from Mexico. I've been at gatherings of my son and his wife and their very close friends--and heated arguments would break out between what you might label liberals and conservatives.

You'd get some liberals--you know, very well-educated people who have been through law

school--who would argue heatedly about all the discrimination against Latinos. My daughter-in-law, who is a very regular person--she is a gal who works for a living and makes a good living and is a very, very pleasant and delightful person--would get in big ideological arguments with these hot-blooded liberal people, saying, "Well, gee, you know, our family didn't have much money. We're a Latino family with eight kids in Davis." She said, "I never was conscious of any discrimination while I was [Laughter] growing up." She was not mentally in focus with the others; you had a schism there. You had a division, and I'm sure that runs all through the Latino community.

VASQUEZ: And probably all other minority groups. So then, what's the lesson? That it is best not to categorize people just by what is most visible about them and assume that because they all look the same that they all are politically the same?

HILL: I think the main lesson is that it's hard to weld a group like this into an effective political entity.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

VIII. OBSERVATIONS ON CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

[Session 3, December 21, 1987]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

Environmental Concerns: Land Use

VASQUEZ: Mr. Hill, in previous sessions, we have talked about some of the processes of California government. In this session, I'd like to address issues that you raised in two of your books, Dancing Bear and Madman in a Lifeboat, and bring some of them up to date. That is to say, one of your books was published in 1968; the other in 1973. Fifteen and twenty years have ensued since that time. I'll be posing questions that address some of the more salient issues.

Let's begin by addressing some of the environmental concerns that you have had over the years, and I understand you still do. You raise an important point in Madman in a Lifeboat when you say that, "environmental awareness and the commitment to correct environmental abuses will probably take place at the cost or the expense of a loss of varying degrees of sovereignty by the people." Do you think that has been the case in the last fifteen years? Specifically in

California, just to use as an example, with the California Coastal Commission?

HILL: Oh, yeah. There is an awful lot of squawking by property owners along the coast that their fundamental rights have been impaired by edicts and regulations of the Coastal Commission. And some evidence, indications along the way, that the courts have supported the commission, but that it in some instances has gone too far in its regulation.

VASQUEZ: Do you think it was an inevitable by-product of having to address a problem that had been ignored for so many years? Was there another way to address environmental concerns?

HILL: No, I don't know of any other way. I suppose John Muir was the first guy that said it when he said everything in nature is hitched on to everything else. But [Senator Henry M.] "Scoop" Jackson also enunciated it very early in the environmental revolution--back about 1969, I think--when he said all environmental problems trace back to land use. Because that's the one really fixed thing in the whole equation. That being the case, almost anything that you set out

to tinker with environmentally is going to have repercussions going back to the question of land use. This means inevitably some encroachment upon the ancient notion that individuals can have hunks of land and have absolute sovereignty over them. The whole history of civilization has been a story of the gradual compromising of those rights, those absolute rights.

VASQUEZ: It seems land ownership in California has gotten progressively more concentrated in the last fifty or sixty years. What do you think that portends for the state economy and its politics?

HILL: Well, what do you mean by "concentrated"?

VASQUEZ: That ownership of land has become more concentrated in fewer hands while, on the other hand, public lands are less and less accessible to the public.

HILL: Well, I don't know about fewer hands. You have this tremendous population influx, so a tremendous number of people are carving out little pieces for themselves. And you have these huge developments--Irvine [Ranch] for instance--but that ownership only stays concentrated until developers get their money out of it. Then it's

fractionated; the ownership is fractionated again.

The Power of Developers

VASQUEZ: Do you think that this development has shaped some politics in California? Some people complain that developers have an inordinate amount of power in the state legislature. Do you agree with that?

HILL: Oh, I think so. I don't know if it's inordinate, but it's a huge amount. Just sort of by the nature of the beast, a developer can go into any legislative body and he has a theoretical halo around his head. He's really after the buck --aren't we all?--but he goes in with this great aura of nobility and says that he wants to bring civilization out of the wilderness, in effect. So, therefore, please give him all kinds of permits and whatnot--the sanction of society--to do it. It's a great sales pitch. And then he makes his money and moves on. You look around and he isn't there. [Laughs]

VASQUEZ: Some argue that developers, as you say, in quest of the buck, have many times overlooked important environmental considerations in their development.

In those cases, how does the public get retribution, or how can it be corrected?

HILL: Well, all kinds of ways. These atrocities have occurred all over the place and in many ways-- shoddy building and messing up natural drainage and polluting and that kind of thing--and I think that's what the environmental revolution was all about in the late sixties. The public suddenly became aware of all these things.

Environmental Concerns: Air Pollution

Up to then, it was the story of what happened first with water and then with air, more or less simultaneously. These are free goods. Land had been practically a free good out here in the West. There was a seemingly limitless amount of it. Then suddenly, in the era after World War II, all these limits started coming home to everybody. There was only so much unpolluted air, only so much unpolluted water, only so much land to be dealt with. And people started giving thought to how all this should be managed.

Environmental Concerns: Offshore Oil Drilling

I've always thought all along that the oil well explosion at Santa Barbara in '69 was one of

the things that triggered this movement. It really wasn't all that big an event, but it had repercussions internationally. People all around the world snapped their heads, particularly people in this country. It got them to thinking who is running the store? Who is managing? How did this thing happen? Who is in charge? And they looked around and found that nobody [Laughter] was really in charge. Or that responsibility was so diffused that you couldn't pin responsibility anywhere. It was not orderly management. And, of course, that's what precipitated the National Environmental Policy Act and the whole thing.

VASQUEZ: Well, here we are twenty years later, and off-shore drilling, including off of Santa Barbara coast, is still very much a live issue. In the last twenty years, are you optimistic about how far we've come in environmental politics here in California?

HILL: Oh, yes. Because I think the crucial factor in environmental management is public awareness. When you get public awareness, you get a bell that can't be unrung. A bell has sounded.

People are aware. And it's just amazing that year after year after year in opinion surveys this environmental awareness is reflected. All the people who are lukewarm or condescending about environmental reform are perpetually astounded because the pollsters always put the question, "Do you think things should be done regulate or correct or improve various environmental elements, regardless of cost?" You get a 70 and 80 percent "yes" on that, year after year. Obviously, that is not a totally rational response because no rational person does anything regardless of cost. But I think that it shows that there is an emotional factor in this awareness. And if you have an emotional factor, it's more powerful than a rational factor, you know. I think there's a rational element in there, too.

Environmental Concerns versus National Security

VASQUEZ: There is another emotional factor that gets factored into the equation sometimes, and that is the argument that the extraction of critical resources--let's use the example of oil--at the cost of the environment, is sometimes necessary

because of national security. How do you think that argument has cut into the debate?

HILL: For my money, the cry of "national security" is the last refuge of scoundrels. It's usually specious as hell. People use that as a blanket argument for anything that they want to do. And then you try to pin them down on the particulars and they start mumbling.

For instance, on the government oil reserve, why should we be pumping oil out of the ground and then putting it back into the ground at great expense? Why not just do intelligent reconnaissance, and make sure it's there to be had if we need it, and seal it off? Well, the answer is there is no money to be made that way.

VASQUEZ: At this moment, some of the largest refineries have fields of tanks out here in San Pedro, in Richmond, California, with millions of barrels of oil, supposedly because of the need for reserve. Don't local representatives, and state legislators, from those areas fight tooth and nail to allow those oil companies to do that, many times endangering the surrounding communities?

HILL: Yeah. You'll find the same pattern followed on

all strategic minerals. The historical record is that the government turns the spigot on and off periodically on strategic minerals, building up stockpiles, and then releasing the stockpiles. The wobbling of the curves on that peculiarly follows the same pattern as the prices of those minerals in the market. When it is commercially advantageous to business for the government to be buying strategic minerals and stockpiling them, everybody is in favor of that. When the commercial supply gets short, suddenly there isn't that great "national defense" need to stockpile those things.

The Anathema of Planning

VASQUEZ: One of the facets of managing natural resources and their extraction has been the cry in some sectors for planning. In the last eight years there seems to be a national ethic for letting the marketplace take care of the needs, both present and future, in this area. Do you think that indicates there is no need for planning?

HILL: No, I think a false alternative is set up there; that is what we're grappling with, a false alternative. The word planning is anathema to

most people. I've often asked myself why. Because intelligent planning, obviously, is something that you can't get away from in human life.

You start out with cavemen planning where their next meal is coming from. You go on from there to the present, people have to plan when they're going to have their vacations and various things like that. So I've asked myself why has the word planning become something that gives people a rash at the very mention--including myself, sometimes--when it's an innate part of living? And the only answer is that planning has gotten a bad name because the connotation is autocratic, dictatorial. The false alternative is between planning and no planning, leaving it to the market place. The real alternative is between autocratic planning and democratic planning. You take almost anything that has been done publicly, where the planning has been democratic, and it has worked. But so often planning has come in the form of edicts coming down from on high.

VASQUEZ: Where would you put California's water planning

in the last fifty years? On which side of that ledger?

HILL: Well, I think, for instance, the public spoke when Pat Brown got the Feather River Project through. It think it was, at that time, the biggest bond issue in history. But, gosh, there was years of public discussion and debate beforehand. Finally, people had a chance to vote on it, and they voted overwhelmingly for it. I think that was a massive piece of planning that was democratically conducted.

VASQUEZ: Why do you think the same thing hasn't happened with oil, with mass transportation, with air pollution?

HILL: Well, starting at the back end there, with air pollution it's just been a big technical problem. You started out twenty-five years ago, say in the sixties and that whole post-World War II era, in effect what you had was factories belching smoke all over the country and emitting noxious gases and everything.

It was really a massive job of revamping the economy. It is something that even the passage of twenty-five years is a pretty short time to

do. That's why we're still grappling with that. The same thing goes with water. And the same thing goes with that root element of land use. We're still grappling with problems of how do we do it to everybody's satisfaction, or to the satisfaction of a majority? For instance, in West Los Angeles or out in the Westwood area, there used to be a beautiful little village. They've let the marketplace run wild, and you've got a great cluster of skyscrapers there. The whole village environment has been ruined. You've got permanent gridlock at Westwood Boulevard and Wilshire [Boulevard]. We have people in the political sphere, like [Councilman Zev] Yaroslavsky, and all the people whose sentiments he represents, saying, "Gosh, we've got to put some brakes on this and look at it differently."

So it's kind of a pendulum corrective action. Just in the last week or so, there have been news developments both ways. There was a story in the New York Times about ten days ago about ranchers up in Montana, who traditionally have been running cattle up there. It has become

a very marginal business. So there's a big movement up there to dump cattle entirely and cultivate the development of wildlife, the old-time wildlife--deer and whatever--because there is a brighter future in the area as a natural area attractive to tourists than there is in losing money feeding cattle on fairly skimpy forage. On the other side of the coin, there was a story in the New York Times Sunday before yesterday about cities that have blocked off traffic in certain downtown streets and put in shopping malls to create more of a village atmosphere.

VASQUEZ: Pedestrian malls.

HILL: Yeah, pedestrian malls. And now, according to this story, some of them are having second thoughts about it, because they're getting squawks from the merchants. One of the places is Oak Park, Illinois, the old nesting place of Frank Lloyd Wright. The other one is the city of Eugene, Oregon. Both of them are turning the clock back and reconverting some of these malls into traffic arteries on the theory that the community will do better all around.

VASQUEZ: Economically?

HILL: Yeah. And it is ironic that it should have happened there where Frank Lloyd Wright did a lot of his early work. And in Eugene, which is a college town. You would expect them to sort of prize the village atmosphere. Of course, it's what we've had the last few years in California, with Berkeley: just in the last year or two they have continued the process of blocking off streets and making it cozier. I wouldn't hang by my toes until they go the other way.

The Power of the Real Estate Lobby

VASQUEZ: Some legislators complain that in the state of California the real estate lobby has gotten so powerful that it is unreasonable to try and pass legislation which may in any way be seen as an infringement on their rights. A modern example of their power was the repeal of the Rumford Fair Housing Act. How do you assess the real estate lobby in the last fifteen years? Has it gotten more powerful? Or less so?

HILL: Well, I don't really know. Of course, the predominant fact is that you're dealing with big bucks there, probably bigger bucks than anything except

maybe the insurance industry. It has always had a tremendous hold on the legislative process, and still does, and has been able to maintain these outrageous rates and criteria for setting rates and that kind of thing. Of course, one of the big political developments of the last fifteen or twenty years has been the increasing influence of campaign contributions, simply because campaign financing has become so expensive.

So, if anything, that has empowered these elements, like insurance and real estate development. But it's amazing in real estate development how the money runs up. You think of a developer as just a nice guy who is building some houses for people. Then, you start figuring the number. He's putting up a hundred houses at \$100,000 a piece. Although it's actually up to \$130,000, \$140,000, something like that now. A hundred of those, and you add it all up, it's a lot of money. He can spend a great deal of time and exert an awful lot of pressure to get what he wants.

More on Public Campaign Financing

VASQUEZ: Some people have proposed that a way of getting

around the advantages that large contributors have towards the campaigns of legislators is public campaign financing. Do you think that's a solution?

HILL: Yeah, I think that probably is the only ultimate answer. Because I don't see any alternatives to having the people with the most money pulling the strings.

VASQUEZ: Tell me, how realistic do you think that is, given the spending styles of some legislators. I'll give an example. I won't mention names, but there is a state senator who in his 1986 campaign spent around \$500,000 and ran unopposed. It seems politicians are getting used to having those big bucks around. Do you think that they may be among the biggest opponents of public financing? Are among the biggest opponents of public financing the politicians themselves?

HILL: Yes.

VASQUEZ: Yet others seem quite comfortable with the idea.

HILL: Yeah. Some of them. . . . They all complain about it, but they all have to kind of go with the flow. There has been a steady build-up, again, of this crucial factor of public awareness

on this, including organizations like Common Cause. You see a tremendous amount in the papers now about the mechanics of this financing--who gave what to whom and what their interest was--and the legislative consequences that followed and all that.

I think there is a process almost paralleling the environmental awareness. But it is working slowly. I think public indignation will build up until something is done about it. I think Jesse Unruh felt the same way about it. It's something that is not going to happen next year because it represents such a radical difference in the way we do things. I think it's an evolutionary thing that is inevitable, but, maybe twenty years off, something like that.

Assessing the Political Press in California

VASQUEZ: Given that the press would play such an important role in that, especially the press that covers California politics, do you think that it is doing an adequate job?

HILL: You know, you can't lump the press all in one basket. You've got the enlightened newspapers, the sophisticated ones.

VASQUEZ: For example?

HILL: The Los Angeles Times. Your big-city papers, the [San Francisco] Chronicle and [San Francisco] Examiner in San Francisco, the Orange County Register, and San Diego, both papers there [the San Diego Union and the San Diego Tribune]. The big, metropolitan papers have a kind of a cosmopolitan outlook. Then you've got a raft of small papers that are still provincial and they're really more interested in the local county fair than they are about what's going on in Sacramento or Washington [D.C.].

VASQUEZ: So you feel pretty optimistic that, over time, the coverage that political affairs--and specifically, campaign costs--receive in the state media will bring about a public reaction?

HILL: Oh, yes. I'm very optimistic about that. Because it's like drops of water on limestone. It's a slow process, but just the inexorable movement in time brings astonishing results, like the Grand Canyon.
[Laughter].

Assuring Public Trust in Environmental Oversight
Bodies

VASQUEZ: One of the problems that you point out in your book on environmental issues is the tactic of stacking boards that oversee pollution problems and environmental problems. How do you see the developments in this area in the last few years in California?

HILL: Oh, I think you've gotten almost complete reform there. Back in the sixties, the standard practice was for polluters to load up these regulatory boards and dominate them. And they were able to do it because nobody was looking, nobody was paying any attention. I wrote a series of stories in the New York Times. We did national surveys and asked our correspondents all over the place, "Please look at your pollution boards and send us a report on who is on them and what their business interests are." The results were appalling. And we printed them. That sort of attention started snowballing all over the country.

When you take a regulatory board like the Coastal Commission and you go to appoint somebody

to it who obviously is extremely biased, there at least is a big public flap, some public discussion and debate, argument, squawking. Which may not prevail in the long run; you still get biased people on these regulatory boards of all sorts. In fact, a lot of them, by statute, are supposed to have representatives of certain interests on there. That way, you limit the muscle that is exerted by biased interests. So I think you've had almost complete reform there.

Assessing the Environmental Protection Agency

VASQUEZ: Since 1970, we've had the Environmental Protection Agency at the federal level. What is your assessment of its impact at the state level?

HILL: Well, they started out with a great deal of momentum. Then they got to be very big, very complicated, and bureaucratic. That set the stage for a lot of foot dragging when regimes came in--or were in--in Washington that didn't want much action. It is awfully easy to get reform initiatives lost in somebody's in-basket.

But, again, I think you're getting a pendulum swing. More and more squawking is from people, saying that, lately, under the Reagan

administration, the EPA has been too slow. And, of course, you're getting court actions on the issue. Which are all for the good, because judges are reasonably objective about this and there has been one decision after the other that the EPA should not drag its feet the way it was doing. So you've almost come full circle to back in the early days, like the famous Storm King case on the Hudson [River], which was one of the first of the big environmental pieces of litigation; a judge really made the decision that environmental values had to be preserved.

VASQUEZ: Here in [East Los Angeles] California, the Capri dumping site, and we've had a couple of other landfill cases in Riverside County that have drawn a lot of public attention. Do you think it has been that public attention that has forced government and, specifically, the EPA, to take action?

HILL: Oh, yes. Sure.

VASQUEZ: Some people are very cynical about progress in the area of environmental protection, arguing that the administration of Ronald Reagan has effectively turned the clock back on efforts to

do that. In your view of the pendulum swing of politics, do you think what Reagan has been able to undo or slow down will be compensated for in succeeding administrations?

HILL: Oh, yes. The Reagan administration and the [Gerald R.] Ford administration were extremely backward on this. Ford was a nice guy but when he was a young fellow in the summers he had done part-time work as a park ranger. To him the word "environment" literally meant "recreation." He didn't understand about pollution. He really didn't. Reagan is notorious for some of his cockeyed ideas about environmental problems, saying that trees give off more noxious vapors than other sources and, "If you've seen one redwood, you've seen them all." It would be hard for subsequent administrations to be quite so benighted--or myopic.

Comparing Three Recent State Administrations on
Environmental Issues

VASQUEZ: Compare for me, if you will, the last three state administrations in the area of environmental policies: the Reagan administration, the Jerry Brown administration, and George Deukmejian's

first administration.

HILL: I think the outstanding one, of course, was the Jerry Brown regime. He in effect spearheaded the movement against atomic power. He was in the vanguard of the whole country and the first one to blow the whistle on the sophistries of atomic power.

I guess I'm a little less than objective on that because I thought pretty early in the game that they [pro-atomic power arguments] were phony. Jerry recognized that and put up roadblocks. If he hadn't done that, this darned state, might be. . . . You know, there were plans on the drawing boards for twenty, thirty, or forty atomic power plants. I think that is the biggest environmental thing that has happened in all those regimes. Deukmejian has been very, very backward on environmental issues. He tried to torpedo coast zone management. And Reagan claims to have been progressive environmentally. And he was in some respects.

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

I guess it was in regard to dam construction on the Smith River. But at the same time, he didn't do a great deal that he might have in the way of putting pressure on the localities to clean up air, water, that kind of thing.

Profit versus Environmental Concerns

VASQUEZ: In an argument where there are environmental concerns on one hand, and the economic well-being of local communities on the other, how do you see the pendulum swinging in the state of California?

HILL: Broadly?

VASQUEZ: Broadly. And I could give you a series of cases. We've heard the argument before, "Yes, the landfill will probably poison our water table. And, yes, it will probably emit noxious gases. But it will bring in more jobs, providing us the wherewithal to buy new cars, television sets, etc." And in case after case environmental considerations take a back seat. Do you think that is an exception? Or do you think that is something we are going to be living with?

HILL: Oh, I think that argument is going to go on forever. There's a tradeoff between unbridled enterprise and money-making, and a pleasant

environment.

I've written and said many times that the thing about the environmental battle is that it can never be won. There is never going to be a time when we can sit back and say, "Well, we've won the battle," because there will always be proposals to do things that will cause environmental impairment. Land use, being the base of the whole thing, is going to be an eternal battle because there are always people who will be wanting to develop things and they will apply constant, steady pressure. It's a case of the public being aware and saying, "Well, you've got a nice project there, but it will involve thus and so sacrifices on the part of the public at large." When it really comes down to the nitty-gritty, the public has got more votes than the XYZ Corporation, no matter how you slice it. So if it really comes down to a hard rock decision, the public is going to prevail.

Federal and State Jurisdictions over Environmental Matters

VASQUEZ: In your writing, you make a compelling argument that it is the states that ultimately can have

the greatest impact on environmental control and environmental concerns, and not the federal government. At what point should state government step into that very delicate balance that you just spoke of?

HILL: Well, that problem really came up first with water pollution. The historic pattern was that states ran all the environmental aspects of life. But then on water pollution, the big problems are interstate problems. I think, obviously, the federal government should move in only where a thing is an interstate matter. Which, of course, applies to air pollution, applies to water pollution, applies to noxious, toxic chemical discharges which may cross state lines. That was the only real reason the federal government got into the act.

If you leave those areas to the states, you are going to have a great donnybrook competition among states to see who can have the lowest standards and attract industry, and that sort of thing. And you need the federal government as kind of a referee. Even on the basic issue of land use, the federal government has moved into

the picture subtly in many ways. The issue of land-use management has come up in congress a great deal. Every time it has come up, why most of the politicians, the members of congress, have shied away from the thing because they know it's dynamite, it's a red flag, just like the word planning. But, actually, the federal government impinges on land use in many ways in terms of taxes and how defense contracts are parceled out and how they are allocated. If a billion-dollar contract goes to Palmdale, that has direct impact on what happens to the land around Palmdale. And, again, on the agricultural side, what the federal government does about agriculture in the way of subsidies determines a lot whether there is going to be any agriculture in a given place, or whether there is going to be so little that land is more valuable in some other use.

VASQUEZ: So you think the ability of states to determine their own environmental concerns has diminished?

HILL: Yes. And not all for the bad, at all. But, yeah, there has definitely been a shift of power.

VASQUEZ: Is there a balance there that has to be maintained, between the state and the federal

government?

HILL: Yes. The ideal balance, I think, is for the federal government to lay down the guidelines. The limitation of that is that, policies and guidelines having been set, nobody likes the idea of little men with badges coming out from Washington and dictating how something is done in Buena Park. They don't know where Buena Park is and they've never been there. They don't know the community. They are just not in a position to execute the policies intelligently and equitably.

That's where the states come in. The ideal situation is the federal government setting down the basic ground rules, and states doing the implementation. If the states have any complaints they can be brought out in open forum, the way it has been going on with offshore oil development. The law on that says the governor of the state, in effect, can complain if some federal proposals for oil development don't fit in with the state's plan.

The Role of Citizen Action

VASQUEZ: In your book written in the early seventies, you

argue that ultimately what will really make or break the environmental revolution will be citizen action. We've had nearly twenty years of the environmental movement. How would you assess the success, or lack of success, of citizen action here in California?

HILL: I think it has been quite impressive, the coastal zone management and the votes for bond issues . . .

[Interruption]

. . . bond issues for parks, and wildlife preservation, and that sort of thing. Yeah, I think there has been high level of public support.

VASQUEZ: What has been your biggest disappointment in the citizen action of the last fifteen years?

HILL: I would say the failure to recognize the importance of community planning, so that you've ended up with development like the horror of Westwood Village. We're getting recognition of those problems now, but it is really becoming so late in the game that it is just going to be that much more expensive to correct things.

Earl Warren, Pat Brown, and everybody who

has been involved in water have always torn their hair, because to get intelligent water planning, the engineering and all takes so long, you have to think ahead about twenty years. It seems like the most obvious thing in the world that the way to have a nice community--it's so fundamental--is to get people together and say, "Well, how do we want this community to look twenty-five years from now?" Decide on your objective. Then the next question is, "Well, how do we get there?" Never in this country, in California or anywhere else, or rarely, have you been able to get people together to do that.

When [First Lady] Lady Bird Johnson was in [the White House], she was tearing her hair about junkyards on the outskirts of cities. Well, the way the system works, it is inevitable that you have junkyards on the outskirts of communities, because you have a built-up area and, gradually, the building gets thinner as you go out of town. Pretty soon, you've got [nothing but] weeds out there. So some guy comes along and buys a tract of weeds and goes to the community to get a permit to operate a junk yard there. So the

decision is made, "Well, which use of land will pay off the most tomorrow? Who pays more taxes, the weeds or the junk dealer?" Well, the junk dealer obvious is going to. So it seems eminently logical to give the guy a permit.

The joker in the deck is that you're dealing in the short term instead of the long term. But that has been the criterion for all community development in this country. The criterion has been what will yield the most tax revenue tomorrow, not twenty-five years from now. There have been rare exceptions--which I can't think of offhand--where people have been sensible enough to think in terms of twenty-five years ahead. But it is terribly hard to galvanize public thinking on that time scale. So that's your problem. The fact that the environmental movement has not, I would say has been my biggest regret.

VASQUEZ: In California in the last fifteen or twenty years, what has most mitigated the effects of citizen action in environmental issues?

HILL: Well, there is constant pressure for development, entrepreneurial activity, which is a counterforce

that is built into our society just as much as the desire for pleasant surroundings. It is human nature to want to build and alter the landscape. You have constant pressure for that. People have ideas and want to pursue enterprises. So you've just got two opposing forces there.

Twenty-five Years of the Environmental Movement

VASQUEZ: How would you then characterize the last twenty-five years in California in terms of the public and business community's reaction to the environmental movement?

HILL: Oh, I think twenty-five years ago in California--and pretty much across the country--business and industry were pretty myopic and unenlightened on their outlook on environmental reform. They thought it was some kind of passing fad and wasn't there to stay. They were just brazening it out.

Well, in this twenty-five years they've gotten religion; they've gotten an understanding that environmental quality and public demand for it is something that is here to stay, that they have to conform, have to go with the flow. Real

estate developers now, when they go to put in a big development, really get socked several ways.

Before, they just bought a piece of land, built a lot of houses or buildings on it, and then walked away. Now, when they do that they find a community is in there saying, "Oh, you are putting up a thousand houses here, are you? Well, what about the roads and the sewage and the schools and the things that you are counting on to support those houses? Kick in some money for that. And the parks."

They are having to do it, and are doing it without any complaint. They are accepting that as part of the game now. Of course, in the long run, the public pays because those are just additional costs of development. But the system --the developers' orientation and the public's orientation to it--have completely changed.

VASQUEZ: Do you see the last decade and a half as being a time of growth for the environmental movement?

HILL: Well, yes, very much so.

VASQUEZ: Do you think that will continue in the next decade or two?

HILL: Yeah, it will continue indefinitely. It will

have hills and dales. It has already. We started out in the early seventies with a tremendously big spate of legislation, until we'd legislated about everything. Then we had a period where the focus was on the implementation of that legislation. Then we had a period of sort of consolidation of gains, and a breathing spell. The environmental organizations, the big ones--Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and whatnot--all went through a spell where they lost membership.

VASQUEZ: What years would this be?

HILL: That would have been around 1980, I think. The original militancy was tempered with more of a spirit of cooperation, when they realized that it could not all be a confrontational affair. You got more done with the two sides, the two sets of interests, cooperating. So there was a period of consolidation in the environmental movement. The organizations revamped their finances, revamped their management and started thinking more in practical terms how to get things done, rather than in confrontational terms.

The latest wave in this evolution has been a

widening of outlook from local problems to global problems. You realize this is not just an intra-state thing, and it is not just an interstate thing, but that if the ozone layer is loused up too much, we're all going to die, no matter whether we are in Kansas or South Africa. Or the acid rain problem, which has become spectacularly international. The problem of deforestation. People are starting to realize that if you chop down half the forests in Brazil, it may well have an impact on the climate and things far beyond Brazil.

IX. PARTISANSHIP IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS

Views on California's Nonpartisanship

VASQUEZ: In Dancing Bear, you characterized California's rather unique approach to partisan politics, or nonpartisan politics, as true nonpartisanship on the local level, degrees of bipartisanship on the state level, and conventional bipartisanship on the national level. Has that been the pattern since 1969 here in California, do you think?

HILL: Yeah, I think so.

VASQUEZ: Degrees of bipartisanship on the state level, and conventional bipartisanship on the national level?

HILL: Well, the California picture hasn't changed very much in that way. There has been, as you know, a little effort to chip away at some of the Hiram Johnson reforms. You've gotten recent court rulings that [allow] political parties to make preprimary endorsements. Which, historically, they didn't. You have to think of California politics in two boxes: one, the state-level politics, and the other the national-level politics.

VASQUEZ: Why is that?

HILL: As far as partisanism goes, I think the partisan lines in California have become more and more dim, if anything. But looking at the federal level, again California set the pattern for the whole country. We see weak, impotent, invisible party organizations. Where you used to have these pronounced, conspicuous, partisan monoliths at the national level--the Republicans and the Democrats--the nation has gone the way of California. It has become more and more blurred. That's why you have this preposterous presidential race this year with a half dozen known nonentities on both sides making fools of them-

selves. Because the old party structure is not behind them at all. There is nobody to bring up likely candidates and put an imprimatur of approval on them, to cultivate them, groom them. The national campaign has become a free-for-all, just like the historic California pattern. And of course that has kind of boomeranged back into California so that when you get a perturbation on the national level--like [Senator] Gary Hart suddenly jumping into the pond last week--why then you look at the impact of that in California. It has thrown all the Democrats in California, the people who were nationally oriented, into utter confusion.

VASQUEZ: What has it done to the electorate?

HILL: Oh, at this moment I don't think any great change.

VASQUEZ: Some people argue that if you've got a strong party system, the electorate has a program, it has something to hold a candidate accountable to; that if you have a weak party apparatus, the image makers are the ones that ultimately wield the power. In some cases, this could be special interests. Has this been borne out in the last

twenty years?

HILL: Oh, I think so. It has become more so that way. Twenty-five years ago, campaign management was kind of a novel thing. You could count on one hand the people who were really doing it, were really prominent in the thing. And now everybody is a campaign manager. There are just countless ones, conducting polls and tailoring candidates' pitches by what the polls show.

The Impact of Opinion Polls on Primary Elections

VASQUEZ: Well, in recent days, we've seen what seems to be a nexus between the large television networks, which includes their personality anchorpeople and state polls conducted at a critical stage in early primaries. They can make or break a candidacy. They can affect the ability to attract campaign contributions or whatnot. What does that do for the choice of candidates available to the California state electorate?

HILL: The whole process has reached ridiculous lengths. As if these primaries in New Hampshire and Iowa had any meaning to them. They really are just sort of beauty contests. They are like the preliminary rounds in a tennis tournament--

something like that--or basketball tournament, or the early games in a baseball season. They really are just beauty contests without any real, substantial meaning. I think the public senses that. They may listen to all this hoopla with a little amusement, but I don't think it affects how they vote in the end.

VASQUEZ: But can it limit the choices that they have to vote on, if early in the process, those who control the money to finance campaigns are discouraged from supporting someone who slips two or three points because of some indiscretion early on in the primary campaigns?

HILL: Does it limit their choices?

VASQUEZ: By the time Californians get to vote in a presidential primary or, in some cases, even a senatorial campaign--sometimes California senatorial candidates do more campaigning outside of California than they do in the state--there has been an elimination of sorts.

HILL: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: What about this polling and reporting nexus that I mentioned earlier.

HILL: Yeah, I think probably they have more choice

really than they did historically. Where a strong party organization would bring up a candidate--[Governor Alfred E.] Al Smith or [Governor] Franklin [D.] Roosevelt, or whoever--you see these personalities moving through the chairs in election after election; they get to be governor of New York, governor of Ohio, or something like that. But as you approach election time just one figure stands out there. Now you have this free-for-all, because of party organization weakness. You have television, where even obscure personalities early in the game can get some kind of exposure. The public gets an awareness of them. You know, tomorrow Peter McDonald, chief of the Navaho tribe, might announce that he was interested in the presidency. Or Lee Iaccoca, or somebody. Bing!, the possibility would be there.

The Value of a Weak Party System

VASQUEZ: So you still see a greater value for the electorate in weak partisanship?

HILL: Yes, I think so.

VASQUEZ: You don't share the fears that weak partisan organization and discipline open up the political

process to the manipulation of special interests?

HILL: No, I just don't.

[I wouldn't suggest that the country's party history--or the state's--has all been a big mistake. But things evolve, and we're in a different ball game.

The party system is useful, certainly, when you have genuine ideological differences. But when you have no clearly defined lineups of beliefs, nominal party organizations and party labels simply become deceptive rallying points for interest blocs.

Historically, Republican-Democrat was a rich-poor division. We still have some unseemly rich and too many poor. But there's been a convergence of life-styles, and you'd have to say that the great majority are now middle-class. The affluent and the poor buy groceries at the same supermarkets. And supermarkets even in lower-middle-class areas are putting in gourmet food departments. There has been an economic leveling that has vitiated your old partisan cleavage. It's almost like the socialist economy in Sweden, where taxi drivers' incomes approach

bank vice presidents' incomes. I think this leveling has produced the great so-called independent vote that has become so important.

There's a tacit bipartisan or nonpartisan consensus on the main things we want--peace, a sound economy, less national debt, less government spending, better education, etc., etc. But there are all kinds of views on how you tackle these problems--and neither party has a slate of across-the-board solutions. If people don't like this disarray, they're free to organize again, any time they can come up with a coherent thesis.

The bad thing is people kidding themselves that names like Republican and Democratic still represent effective monoliths of some sort.]*

The Recent Role of Lobbyists

VASQUEZ: Following up on that, there have been some significant rules changes in the game here in California regarding lobbying activities, since you wrote Dancing Bear. How would you assess those? In fact, how would you assess the power

* Mr. Hill added the preceding bracketed material during his review of the draft transcript.

of the Third House in California politics?

HILL: Oh, I think their influence has been lessened by the exposure of their activities. It hasn't really been curbed, but there is much more light of day on their activities. So I think they probably can get away with less influence than they could before. At the same time, you have a countervailing force. That is this money thing, that the few powerful ones, through money, have a tremendous amount of influence. Not through lobbyists buying state senators dinners and booze and stuff, but just through the legally legitimate avenue of campaign contributions.

VASQUEZ: Going back and forth to Sacramento and traveling around the state talking to people as part of this project, one gets consistent complaints or statements to the effect that Sacramento has become a meat market; that the accessibility of public officials to the money of lobbyists is much greater; that it is more blatant than it ever was before. It is said that the kind of fund-raising activities that go on today, while necessary exigencies of being elected, has really corrupted politics in California. How do you

react to that?

HILL: I think that feeling is just the other side of the coin of this business of exposure. People are just more conscious of this process now than they were. You go back into history; the skullduggery that went on--either at the state level or the federal level--was pretty bad. I don't think it is any worse now.

You say you get these complaints as you go around the state. I think that is just evidence that people are more aware of these things. So that is a healthy sign. The more aware they become, the more likely they are to do something about it. But you take in California in the old days--I'm trying to think of the name of that guy who was the lobbyist for the liquor . . .

VASQUEZ: [Arthur H.] Artie Samish?

HILL: Yeah, Samish. And today there is a guy--I can't remember his name--that is the lobbyist for the liquor industry and the race tracks. He's about number one.

VASQUEZ: [James D.] Garibaldi?

HILL: Yeah, Garibaldi. I think, if anything, he's probably less influential than Samish was back in

the good old days.

VASQUEZ: Well, that's interesting, because that is one of the complaints one hears from lobbyists themselves. [Laughter] They say that they are being driven out of business, that it is costing so much to be a lobbyist because of the aggressive fund-raising by legislators.

HILL: Right.

VASQUEZ: It would appear it was cheaper to buy dinner and a few drinks, than it is to attend one of the parties or dinners held right before a crucial vote in Sacramento today.

HILL: Yeah, I think that's a trend, too. And it's all coming down to this question of campaign financing and how we regulate it.

VASQUEZ: Do you see that being the major push in modern politics, perhaps something that California will become the model for?

HILL: Yeah. And I think of the electorate being acquainted with candidates mainly by television has its own self-leveling mechanism too. You notice that as soon as candidates start going too far with their television pitches there is a reaction to it. Right away, you read stories

about the campaign managers and the advertising agencies all having to trim their sails and change their tactics.

Negative Campaign Advertisements

VASQUEZ: Give me an example in the last ten, fifteen years of that; of a really blatant example where someone really did themselves harm with their own campaign ads.

HILL: You see reports from all the states of this happening. Candidates getting dirty in their denunciations of their opponents and that kind of thing. I can't think of specific examples in California. Was it the [Senator Barry M.] Goldwater campaign where there was the big ruckus about the little girl picking petals off a flower, a finger on the atomic bomb?

VASQUEZ: That was the Goldwater versus Lyndon Johnson campaign.

HILL: There was an immediate reaction against that and they had to kill it. You've had things like that happening in state campaigns in all the states.

Jesse Unruh and a Negative Media Image

VASQUEZ: I wonder why Jesse Unruh was never able to counteract the "Big Daddy" image?

- HILL: I think in the latter years, he pretty well rose above that, in his state treasury years. He did wonders with that, taking an obscure office, making it extremely powerful. But the "Big Daddy" image was pretty much from people in the legislature sniping at him. He was such an autocrat there and was bound to create a lot of enemies. I don't think that "Big Daddy" thing came from the public particularly.
- VASQUEZ: It came from his cohorts?
- HILL: Yeah.
- VASQUEZ: How do you think history will treat Jesse Unruh in California state politics?
- HILL: Oh, I think as a very, very big figure. And as I said before, he had that weakness that he was a political technician and he concentrated on things at the professional political level. But he never did any building of his grass-roots constituency.
- VASQUEZ: Do you think it would have been possible for him to hold public office at the state level--I'm thinking about the governor's office--if only he had not had competition from his own peers?
- HILL: Oh, yes. Yeah, I think he could have if, over

the years, he had paid more attention to developing grass-roots support, or just developing some grass-roots familiarity. He was a very familiar figure to those of us who operated in the political realm, but I don't think he was well known among the electorate at large. And to get to be governor, you have to be.

[End Tape 5, Side B]

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

Where We've Come in Twenty-five Years

VASQUEZ: In 1969, you wrote, "California's government has proved equal to the myriad problems of assimilating"--then--"seventeen million people. It has used epochal engineering to rationalize the water supply. It knit the state together by a matchless network of highways. It shepherded the state through successive economic transitions, from mining to agriculture, conventional industry and, finally, aerospace and esoteric electronic technology. It built the largest state-sponsored university and college system in the world. And it pioneered in developing solutions to such nationwide problems as urban traffic management and air pollution." How would you assess that

statement twenty years later?

HILL: Well, I think we've come to a point of where the things that have to be done are not so obvious. We've come to the stage where we're having to do a lot of mid-course correcting, just because of the growth that has occurred.

This great network of freeways, for instance, has now generated so much traffic that we're face to face with the problem of what we do to alleviate it. You get these ridiculous situations like at Irvine, which is criss-crossed by four or five major freeways. There is so much traffic on those freeways that it overflows onto the community streets of Irvine. To try and remedy that, they are now talking about building circumferential highways to drain off some of that pressure on the freeways. That's kind of a part of an endless process of putting Band-Aids on top of Band-Aids.

I guess what we're up against is the limits of growth, and all that implies. You move from highways over to water, and it's a question now of what we do about amplifying the southern California supply. This is where we came in, with the Feather River Project, only now it is a

question of what are we going to do up north to tap off more water. And the dispute starts all over again, people in the north not wanting to yield any of their rights to water.

I think the university system has been rocking along fairly serenely, when you compare it with the hippie upheaval of the sixties. So it is probably the lesser of educational problems. But below the university level, you have a fierce educational problem of not having enough money to do what a lot of people think we should be doing. This means not having, apparently, a very effective administrative anatomy, so that the kids going into the universities have a decent grounding. I think the whole lower educational system has fallen into a state of disrepair. In your lower schooling, discipline alone is a major problem, where it never was historically. How do you preserve enough order to pump knowledge into kids? It's terrible when you can't maintain physical order, when you have disciplinary anarchy. And then you have questionable teaching capabilities, teachers loaded with so much administrative work that they can't

concentrate properly on teaching. Where is California? Somewhere way down the list on the classroom size.

VASQUEZ: Close to last in the nation.

HILL: Yeah, one of the poorest in the country.

VASQUEZ: Why did that happen, in a short quarter of a century? How did California go from the top echelons in providing public education to the bottom?

Crime: The Root of Educational Decline

HILL: Well, I think it is partly a national problem. A lot of these problems are national problems. You've got the disciplinary problem in all the big cities. It's another big trouble area, and it ties in with crime. Crime is at the bottom of your school-disciplinary situation.

When you say crime, I think what you're really saying is that you have segments in society that do not concur on standards of conduct and behavior. That cleavage among segments in society, caused because they're not all dedicated to the same standards of behavior. All sorts of things have been aggravating those cleavages over the years. You had the black poverty problem,

being epitomized in Watts. You've had huge influxes of aliens--Mexicans, Asiatics, and people from the Middle East. Not that any of these people are inherently bad, but they're not geared into the ethical and behavioral mores here.

When you don't have people in concurrence on standards, you have problems and confusion and trouble. And, of course, of all the places in country, California has probably had more of these influxes from outside, or at least more varied, than any other state in the country.

A Decline in Public Ethics?

VASQUEZ: But only recently, as a result of a series of indictments and trials of prominent administration figures, blue ribbon commissions on ethics have argued that the commitment to ethical standards by some of our highest officials--a pretty homogeneous group of people, I think you'll admit --is totally out of balance with the rules of the game. Ethical standards among public officials, at the highest echelons of our government, is very low.

HILL: Oh, you mean on the national level?

VASQUEZ: On the national level. But it gets transmitted to the state level quite easily.

HILL: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: Some would argue that the model set by the highest is the model that is followed by the lowest.

HILL: Yeah. Of course, in the Reagan administration, looking at it nationally, you had this kind of hands-off, laissez-faire management atmosphere. It's really a matter of discipline. Discipline comes down from the top. Whatever anybody thinks of Reagan, you'll seldom find him stepping forward and enunciating any standards. I think that is something that has to be done all the time in any kind of a social or political group, to keep things up to scratch. [Laughter] It's the same with a household, [Laughter] "Pick up your room." You know, of all the things that Reagan may be, you don't think of him as doing that.

VASQUEZ: And yet, few in modern political history have more insistently articulated the need to return to the standards of the "American Way" and the moral standards of Christianity.

The Reagan Ethical Standard

HILL: Reagan has this Norman Rockwell, idyllic image in his mind of the way things might be. It pretty much existed in the mind of Norman Rockwell, who just depicted the bright, nice, kind and sweet side of everything. Norman Rockwell was essentially rooted in the 1920s. But you didn't see any Norman Rockwell covers about the Teapot Dome Scandal and all the corruption that went on in that time.

Yeah, when Reagan moralizes, it is kind of lofty terms, these amorphous, idealized terms, where there is no real evident application to day-to-day conduct. I'm thinking back, for instance, to when [General Dwight D.] Eisenhower took over in the European theater and we had the problem of dovetailing American military people with the British military hierarchy. They had to be completely dovetailed. The structure was set up so that there would be one American officer and one British officer.

Like all in-law situations up to that time, there had been an awful lot of nattering and backbiting and elbowing and outright sabotage--

not physical--but organizational sabotage. Eisenhower stepped in there and did the only thing possible. The first day in, he said loud and clear, "We're going to have these merged staffs. Anybody who can't get along with the other side, now is the time to get off the boat." Bing! He said it very loud and clear and left no doubt that anybody who engaged in backbiting and political manipulation would be out on his ear, quick. It set the tone for the whole operation. Ike was pretty much that way when he became president. He was more low key because it was a civilian job.

He wasn't a military dictator at that point. But you remember when they caught [Assistant to the President] Sherman Adams with the grease there? Ike didn't mess around. Sherman Adams, even though he was a very close friend and long-time pal, Sherman Adams was out the next day. But contrast that with all of this monkey business that's been going on in Washington, [Michael] Deaver and the WedTech [Corporation] guy. . .

VASQUEZ: [Franklin C.] Nofziger.

HILL: Yeah, Lynn Nofziger. All Reagan does is sit back in the White House and say, "Oh, they're nice people." Or [Admiral John] Poindexter and [Colonel Oliver] North, a couple of wrongos like that. So you're right, the thing has to come from the top down, and if the tone isn't set there, you get slackness.

California's Diversity and the Difficulty of Governance

VASQUEZ: Some people attribute part of the difficulty in governing California to the diversity, and an increasing diversity of the state--racial, ethnic, linguistic, regional. Others see that diversity adding to the dynamism of what California is and represents for the rest of the country. How do you see that diversity?

HILL: I think it's both. It's both. And, again, you've got a case of countervailing forces. Where you end up depends on how effectively you deal with the problems that come up.

Probably the biggest difference we've been speaking of over this span of years has just been the question of size. And people tend to think in terms of--it sounds fancy, but the only word I

can think of is--"linear extrapolation," "linear growth." Four is twice as good as two, and eight is twice as good as four. If you have two freeways and they're jammed, you solve the problem by building four freeways. But the fact is that isn't the way the world is, and people are always finding that out to their distress.

You run into the law of diminishing returns, and economies of size come to a crashing halt at a certain point. In your environmental terms, it is the carrying capacity of land--you know, how many elk, bison, cattle, or people can you put on a given expanse. There's a sociological phenomenon that I'm sure you're familiar with. I forget who the sociologist was who first enunciated it, but it was some fellow with a Russian name, who pointed out the obvious thing.

If you have two people, you have two relationships: A to B and B to A. You add a third person, and you have six relationships: A to B and C, and B to C and A and so forth. You add a fourth person, and you really start getting a complicated web of relationships there. It is growing more than geometrically; I think it is

growing logarithmically. The classic case is the time the bridge tender at the bridge over the Bronx River in New York that leads to Manhattan didn't come to work for some reason and didn't put the bridge down, the trains couldn't get across. One man who was bollixing up the operations of about ten million people. In other words, inter-dependency grows.

Heaven knows, we've got enough land in California to accommodate lots more people living comfortably. Indeed, as we do nationally. God, you fly across the country in an airplane and all you see is vast [Laughter] open spaces. They weren't settled originally because of climate. And now, with air-conditioning and things, that is not a limitation any more. Yet there they stand, while people are jammed in, often unhappily, in cities.

VASQUEZ: So are we back to planning?

HILL: Physical room isn't the problem, but the interrelationships are the problem. You get a big, tremendous injection, say, of Asiatics into this society--which was originally Latinos and Anglos--with all of their different standards and

criteria that they're familiar with. Everything in the world, some good and some bad. You've got some Korean gangs killing other Koreans here, which doesn't contribute to order. And at the other extreme, you have Koreans and Vietnamese and Laotians, and heaven knows what, who are so eager to do the right thing, that their children are outshining Anglo children in schools, and outshining your other established blocs, like blacks and Latinos. And they are moving into Anglo neighborhoods and people are getting their backs up about this. Too many scholarships being won by Asiatics, and simply because they work harder.

It's a universal phenomenon. It happened even in a tremendously homogeneous country like England, where by and large, the stability of England has been homogeneity down through the ages, that you had absolute consensus on standards. Suddenly, into London and other parts, you had a great influx of Pakistanis. They were poor; they took over the menial work. But, mostly--or conspicuously--they were store-keepers. They stayed open on Sunday, where the

old-line British would never think of staying open on Sunday. To the old-line Britishers, that's unfair competition, and they started calling them "rag heads," and derogating them in every way. On the plus side, they have enough admirable qualities, generally admired qualities, that I think the other day a Pakistani was elected mayor of Bradford. Which is almost inconceivable, you know.

There are plusses and minuses, both ways. I think the art of government is the art of devising adjustments. But how you take a great mixture of people who don't have the same fundamental ethical and moral behavioral standards, and try to get them into marching in time with everybody else, that is the big problem.

In some areas you've gotten conspicuously deteriorating standards. Black teenagers who have dropped out of school, maybe before high school even, stand around on street corners dealing in dope. How do you tell people like that that in order to have a nice, smooth-running society, you have to have the same standards that I do? I mean, that's even rougher than the

economic thing, the poverty thing. Or the gang business. In the Latino population, you have a stratum of similarly disoriented people. You get the gangs fighting each other, and a whole lot of innocent people are mowed down in the process. I think that's probably the biggest challenge facing us as a state today: how do you get to those people and elevate them out of what amounts to little more than savagery?

Maintaining Faith in Uniform Standards

VASQUEZ: Representatives of some of these communities might argue that if you want these groups to maintain the same standards, you've got to give their groups the same opportunities.

HILL: Right.

VASQUEZ: Do you see a connection there?

HILL: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: And do you feel that there is a problem in that?

HILL: I think the root of all of this is outlaw activity. Everybody hoots at this self-esteem commission, but I think self-esteem is at the root of the whole thing.

VASQUEZ: [Assemblyman] John Vasconcelos's [Commission on Self-Esteem].

HILL: Everybody in the world is striving for identity. God, it's a fundamental human urge, probably more fundamental than sex or food or anything else. striving for some sort of identity, some sort of recognition. These kids hanging out in the streets and putting on funny costumes, drawing funny graffiti on the walls, seem to me--any psychologist would tell you--are souls crying out for recognition. Which is another way of saying, crying out for support. How do you give them the recognition, the self-esteem, the support that they need? How do you get them into the system? We haven't solved that. I think it's such an important, big, crucial thing. Again, it's one of those things that has to be enunciated from the top.

VASQUEZ: The conventional wisdom, according to the press and television is that government has no responsibility, no role to play, in any of that. Do you agree?

HILL: No. I think it's ridiculous, because the basic function of government is to maintain order, [Laughter] if nothing else. That's part of maintaining order. When you just have out-and-

out crime running rampant, people start buying guns to protect themselves, hiring security services and building houses and apartments with great barricades around them. Right in this neighborhood, about December 1, in a period of about three days, ten cars had their windshields smashed--and nothing taken from the cars. Just arrant vandalism. In other words, not by anybody in the community, but people who were going through here. They might have been middle-class Anglo kids for all I know, just out on a toot and were overexuberant. But anybody who would do that that systematically has a screw loose somewhere that needs to be fixed.

VASQUEZ: You've been an astute observer of California politics and the California governmental process for at least twenty-five years. If you were to succinctly summarize what has happened to California politics in those twenty-five years, how would you do that?

HILL: Well, I would say that considering this immense growth that we've had, and considering all the problems that have arisen--everything from immigration to nuclear power, and all these

consequences of growth, traffic and water and all
--considering all those things, that again, we've
rocked along with remarkable stability. It's not
a case of the bear dancing well, but of the fact
that the bear dances at all, the fact that we
haven't had more chaos and all here than we have.

[End Tape 6, Side A]