

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

JOHN F. BURBY

Governor's Press Secretary, 1961 - 1967

August 12, 24, and September 22, 1987
Los Angeles, California

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

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None.

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

Oral History Program
History Department
California State University, Fullerton

Oral History Program
Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

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

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

This interview is printed on acid-free paper.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

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Interview Time and Place:

August 12, 1987
Times Mirror Building, Los Angeles, California
Session of one-and-a half hours

August 24, 1987
Times Mirror Building, Los Angeles, California
Session of one-and-a half hours

September 22, 1987
Home of John F. Burby in Pasadena, California
Session of two hours

Editing

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

Burby reviewed a copy of the edited transcript and returned it with minor corrections.

Papers

There exist no private papers which the interviewer was able to consult for this interview.

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

John F. Burby was born in Benton Harbor, Michigan, on September 2, 1924. He attended public schools in New Jersey and later attended the University of Hawaii. He was awarded the Nieman Fellowship for advanced study at Harvard in 1960.

Burby served as Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr.'s press secretary from 1961 to 1967, replacing Hale Champion, who became director of the State Department of Finance and Brown's executive secretary. As press secretary, Burby handled a myriad of press and communications assignments, including speechwriting as a member of a discrete team which included Roy Ringer, Louis Haas, and Richard Kline.

When Burby left Sacramento in 1967, he served in President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration until 1969 as special assistant to Secretary of Transportation Alan Boyd. From 1970 to 1974, he edited and published the highly respected National Journal, and was a consultant to the federal government on technology, energy, and the environment from 1974 to 1978.

In 1978, Burby became a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times and in 1983 was named assistant editor of the editorial pages. In addition to editorials on state government, he also writes about environmental, energy, and arms control issues. He is the author of the book, The Great American Motion Sickness (1971).

Burby was a lieutenant in World War II, and served as a pilot in the United States Army Air Corps from 1942 to 1947. He attended the University of Hawaii and began his journalism career with the Hawaii bureau of the United Press. He later worked for the Honolulu Advertiser and the San Francisco Chronicle, where he came to the attention of the Brown administration.

I. LIFE HISTORY

[Session 1, August 12, 1987]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

Family History

VASQUEZ: Mr. Burby, can you tell me something about your life, some history, where you were born, family origins, what part of the country you come from?

BURBY: Well, where I was born is kind of irrelevant, because I left there when I was two years old. I was born in Benton Harbor, Michigan, on September 2, 1924. My mother was a public health nurse and my father was an engineer [who] went to the University of Michigan. When I was two, we moved to Cicero, Illinois, which is Al Capone's old stomping ground. And then we moved to a town called La Grange, Illinois, where we lived for I guess we were there until I was around ten, and then my youngest sister got quite ill. This is in the 1930s. They didn't know as much about kidneys and that sort of thing as they do

now. So the doctor packed us all off to Arizona, and I lived on the desert for two years, the best two years of my life. Then we came and lived in California for a little while. Then we went back East, and we finally settled down in Hastings on Hudson, New York, long enough for me to finish high school.

VASQUEZ: What was most impressive to you about the West?

BURBY: The Indian standing on the railroad platform [Laughter] in Phoenix. I'll never forget that morning. The thing I remember most about it was the absolutely clear-blue sky and this steam locomotive pumping all that steam into the air, and this Indian standing there with a blanket over his shoulder. But beyond that, we lived in a little town called Cave Creek, which is about thirty miles from Phoenix, northeast, I think. And you [took] all of your trips to Phoenix in the summertime because when it started to rain the road wasn't paved and your chances of getting through were very small. But I don't remember it as being terribly different except, you know, at that age every place is pretty much the same. It's a jungle; it's just different kind of

animals in it.

Growing Up in the Great Depression

VASQUEZ: Was this during the Depression?

BURBY: This was in '34, '35, '36.

VASQUEZ: Was there any difference in how the Depression expressed itself socially in different parts of the country? As much as you were able to notice.

BURBY: Well, you see, my father made a good living all through the Depression. I missed the Depression. We lived in a neighborhood where there were no deprived people. When we lived out on the desert in Arizona, we lived next door to a kind of calabash aunt and uncle who were both drawing disability from the U.S. Army. She had been a nurse and we were there because she and my mother had nursed together during World War I. He went around mining old gold mines and taking out enough to pad out his disability income, and then some. It was just very pleasant out there. I mean, we lived down the road from the dairy and the guy who owned the dairy had a kid about my age and we used to go over there and his mother used to cook up berry pies and pour this raw milk, raw cream [Laughter] on them. So the Depression didn't

exist for me.

VASQUEZ: Did it have any effect on your thinking about social matters? For most people in that generation, the Depression is so heavily imprinted on their psyche.

BURBY: No. No. My social conscience started long after that. I came from a very apolitical family. You talk about "most people" in that period. Go back and look at the first Gallup poll, which was done in 1936. In it you find that 65 percent of the people in the United States told Gallup that they thought the government was spending too much money to help the poor.

VASQUEZ: This is in 1936?

BURBY: Nineteen thirty-six. So, I just missed it. I mean, it was all around me but I was shielded from it. It came as a great surprise to me later when I got out of my cocoon in the army and started running into guys who had gone through this. People who had gotten out of high school and had to go to CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps because there was nothing else for them to do. That was the beginning of my growing up.

VASQUEZ: In the army?

BURBY: Yeah.

Education: High School

VASQUEZ: What was high school like? What did it mean to you?

BURBY: Well, there wasn't a single black student in it, for one thing. High school was a very pleasant experience for me. I did well in school.

VASQUEZ: What was the name of your high school?

BURBY: Hastings High School. We lived on a street that dead-ended at the foot of a hill. And at the bottom of the hill there was six tennis courts [and] a baseball park. In the winter time they used to take the nets down and flood the tennis courts and that's where we ice-skated. I mean, you can't live better than that. We used to swim in the Hudson River. I may be the last person you'll ever talk to who did that. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: When you finished high school, or while you were in high school, what was your idea of what you were going to do with your life? Did you have career plans? Did you have college plans?

BURBY: It's very interesting. I can't remember why this happened. They passed things out to you in school and asked you to fill them out all the

time. I remember writing down one time, as a first choice of what I wanted to do after I got out of school was be a newspaper man. The second choice, I wanted to be a pilot. I can't tell you why I wanted to do those, except that I had a remarkable English teacher who had introduced me to newspaper writing, in anthologies. I found the notion of going and seeing what was happening for yourself, and then writing about it, very compelling, very interesting. I was good in math, but I had no interest in using math and engineering or anything. I get awfully angry at my kids these days for waiting so long to discover what it is [Laughter] they want to do for a living.

VASQUEZ: You did both of those things.

BURBY: Well, but I think that's kind of an accident. I did both of those things. But I really can't get terribly upset in the end, because I didn't have any better idea when I was a kid what I wanted to do.

Family Influence on Social Awareness

VASQUEZ: Who in your family had the greatest influence on you in terms of what you wanted to do with your

life and your social awareness?

BURBY: The social awareness, neither my mother nor my father. It was people outside of the family. As I say, they were very apolitical. I grew up understanding good manners, being pressed to read. My mother taught me to read out of the Chicago Tribune when I was just a kid. My father taught me how to play golf, which is a nice, middle-class thing. And I must say, I still worry sometimes about whether it really hurt him that I turned out not to like golf much and went to tennis early on. [Laughter] But it was that kind of a family. It was a "family" family. There was not a lot of discussion of social problems, or even the world outside, at dinner table. It was more conversation about where we were going to go on vacation and what we were going to do on the weekend.

VASQUEZ: What's the ethnic background of your family, and what part of the country are they from?

BURBY: Well, my father is from Michigan. Third-generation Irish. And my mother was from Kentucky. She was Welsh. There's a Welsh community down in that part of the country that's been there

forever. They came over in the 1600s, I think. Pure Welsh. I mean, nobody in these communities but Welsh.

VASQUEZ: Was there an extended family that you interacted with, or was it pretty much just the immediate family?

BURBY: This was then, and still is, a family that split and [was] spread all over. Some of them stayed in Michigan. One of my father's brothers came out here and taught law at USC [University of Southern California]. Another one practiced medicine up in San Bernardino.

VASQUEZ: So, many of them came to California.

BURBY: Two of them did, two of the three brothers. The sister stayed in Michigan. And in those days, traveling those distances to see family was just out of the question. There were not any other Burbys in the telephone book any place that I ever lived. Because the name, apparently, was invented on Ellis Island.

VASQUEZ: As were many others.

BURBY: There are not a lot of Burbys in this country.

VASQUEZ: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BURBY: Two sisters.

VASQUEZ: Are you the oldest?

BURBY: I'm the oldest. I have a sister three years younger than I.

VASQUEZ: What's her name?

BURBY: Ann. Before I left, but after it became pretty clear that there was no way I was going to finish college before a war broke out, the family moved to Teaneck, New Jersey. I didn't know then why, but it turned out to be an absolutely fascinating story, the likes of which Arthur Miller once did an entire play about. It seems that the company my father was vice-president for engineering in, was cheating on military contract specifications. And he found out about it, and he went to the other officers. They told him to mind his own business, and he quit. By that time, when that happened, he was nicely into his fifties, and that was a very tough thing to do.

VASQUEZ: Did it impact your family economically?

BURBY: No, because by that time, everybody in the country was aware that there probably was going to be some kind of a war, somewhere. And we moved across the river to New Jersey and he went to work for Bendix Aircraft as an engineer. So

the only impact was the uprooting from this nice neighborhood where the street ended in tennis courts. [Laughter] But even that wasn't too terrible. Again, we lived in a nice neighborhood. I was only there for about a year and then I went into the service.

College and Military Service

VASQUEZ: So you went into the service right after high school?

BURBY: About a year after.

VASQUEZ: Did you go to college first?

BURBY: Well, I went to junior college in New Jersey, for a while. [Fairleigh Dickenson Junior College] I didn't find that terribly satisfying, and the local newspaper was looking for a sports writer. Everybody in my generation started out in sports. [Laughter] That was the first writing experience they had. So I worked there until I was eighteen and old enough to go into the service when I went into the air force, the Air Corps they used to call it.

VASQUEZ: That would be what? Nineteen forty?

BURBY: Oh, no, 1943. Well, I signed up in the fall of 1942. That was an incredible, messy process of

pulling people into the service at that time. It just took several months for them to call me in.

Pilot Training

VASQUEZ: Tell me a little bit about your military experience and going into the Air Corps as a very young man, becoming a pilot.

BURBY: I enjoyed it. You know the book "The Good War"-- who's the Chicago writer?

VASQUEZ: Studs Terkel?

BURBY: Studs Terkel. An awful lot of what's in there was very valid. And at least during the training part of it, that was just fun. I mean, who could argue with learning how to fly an airplane? It got a little rough on people now and then. I remember when I got to basic flying school, my instructor was a Cajun. I never understood a word he said to me. [Laughter] But he was a very good pilot. I worked very hard for him, and he sort of took me under his wing. The instructors used to go up and do Luftberry circles. Do you know what that is?

VASQUEZ: I think so.

BURBY: Everybody gets in a circle. And then you tighten up the circle until the first person stalls out.

VASQUEZ: No, I don't . . .

BURBY: You fly around nose-to-tail in a circle. And then you just keep tightening it up and increasing the turn, and pretty soon the plane won't take any more. It just falls out of the circle. And you lose, and then they close up behind you.

VASQUEZ: Was this part of the training?

BURBY: Oh, it was something they did for fun. But I was the only student they let do that.

VASQUEZ: Is that right.

BURBY: So, you know, that's great sport. I got a little arrogant about that. And the first time I had to go off on a cross-country flight was 6:00 on a Sunday morning. We were just sent in all directions, solo. And we were told where to fly, and where to turn and when to be back.

So I was flying along, and I dozed off, or my mind wandered. But the effect was the same, because when I started looking around again, I was no longer sure where I was. [Laughter] So, in those days, what they told you to do is, when you lost your bearings, was to go down until you were low enough to see the sign on the railroad

station in a town. Then you could find that on the map. For some reason or another, when I got down low enough to see the sign on the railroad station--I think it was about 7:00 in the morning--and I got very upset with the fact that they had me flying around, all by myself on a Sunday morning, and everybody else in this town was sleeping.

You could change the pitch of the propeller in those airplanes just by moving a switch back and forth. And it made a god-awful growl. So I flew over this town working this prop pitch back and forth. Now, this was 1943, when a long distance call cost a hell of a lot of money. And there must have been twenty phone calls to the base. In the first place, I was low enough so they could read the number on my tail, right? So when I got back, I thought I was going to get thrown out. But except for that, the learning to fly was a great experience.

Overseas Duty

VASQUEZ: Did you see duty overseas?

BURBY: Yeah. I was instructing for about two months. In those days, they were just beginning to change over in advance flying school to real airplanes,

instead of trainers. So they brought in a bunch of B-25's. They checked me out in a B-25, and I was an instructor in that for a couple of months. I really wanted to go overseas. One night we were coming in. There were two of us coming in from opposite directions. There were two runways on the field. So the notion was that you'd come in one plane on a right-hand pattern, the other on a left-hand pattern, and you'd straighten out on the final approach and go down together. We were doing pretty well on our approach, and I looked up and the guy coming in on the left-hand approach had overshot, and he turned this thing [airplane] up, and I was counting rivets on the belly of this B-25, right outside our window. Nothing happened, fortunately. But we got down and taxied back and I thought, Well, that's enough of that. [Laughter] So I volunteered to go overseas, immediately.

This was in mid-1944 and a lot of things were happening in a lot of parts of the world and they could use every pilot they could get there hands on. So I went overseas. The mistake I made was that I thought that because I had the

time in B-25's, I would wind up in a B-25 outfit, which was what I wanted. Instead, I wound up in troop carrier.

VASQUEZ: Where?

BURBY: Let's see, the first place was Hollandia, New Guinea. I was kind of restless about that, and I kept trying to get out. Now I'm just as glad I didn't. I mean, that had an influence on me, too. But the kinds of things we used to do was go up and land on what passed for runways that the engineers could put together behind the lines and take the wounded out and take them back to hospitals. There was something very gratifying.

VASQUEZ: Sort of what the "medi-vacs" do now?

BURBY: Uh-huh. There's something very gratifying about that. We used to drop supplies, food, and ammunition. . . . I mean, it wasn't all that interesting. A lot of it was making cargo runs around. [We were] sort of in between the long-range transports and the Piper Cubs, we sort of filled in the medium-range flying cargo plane. And we made paratroop drops.

VASQUEZ: Did you write at all? Did you practice journalism when you were in the service?

BURBY: No.

VASQUEZ: You never wrote for any of the military newspapers?

BURBY: No, there just wasn't time. [Laughter] They kept us pretty busy.

VASQUEZ: How long were you in the service? Do you remember when you got out?

College Under the GI Bill

BURBY: I got out in January of '46. For some reason or other, I didn't have enough points to get out immediately. By that time, I had a squadron, just as the war ended. Then they began to tear the air force apart and ship everybody home.

VASQUEZ: The Air Corps?

BURBY: The Air Corps. And nothing worked. I remember one flight I made, I had a copilot who'd never been in that kind of airplane before. And a Signal Corps radioman who'd never been in an airplane before. And a crew chief who didn't know how to change the gas tanks. [Laughter]

But my commander sort of took pity on me. He said, "Look, you've got some months to go. I'm going to transfer you to Hawaii." Nicest thing anybody ever did for me. And I sat in

Hawaii and read a lot and pestered colleges a lot. I finally wrote my uncle from there. Everybody was full by 1946. I mean, the GI Bill which was, I think, the most marvelous social instrument ever written, had filled every college. My uncle said, "Stay there." He said, "I've got students who have to stand at the windows looking in."

VASQUEZ: Is this the uncle teaching here at USC?

BURBY: Teaching at USC.

VASQUEZ: What was his name?

BURBY: William E. Burby. He, apparently, had taught at the University of Hawaii on an exchange program sometime. He said, "That's a good university, and especially if it's not as full as this one, you couldn't do any better." So I stayed there and went to college. But I spent the summer before I started college reading.

The Importance of Reading

VASQUEZ: What kind of reading?

BURBY: Oh, mostly history. Of course, I read a lot during the war, too. That was another lucky break. I wound up my squadron's troop infor-

mation and education officer. So every week I'd get a big box of books, paperback books. Classics and Shakespeare and you name it, it was all in there. Thomas Wolfe. So I got first pick, then I'd put them out on the table for everybody else. Sometimes we were in the air three or four hours on a run, and you'd sit there and read in the cockpit.

By that time I was assigned to the Far East air force headquarters. In the process of being overseas, I had wound up flying a lot of different kinds of airplanes as a sort of test pilot. One morning they called me in and they said, "You're going to Brisbane, Australia." They assumed that when the war ended every American who had ever been to Australia would want to go back one more time before he went home. And this would include a lot of brigadier generals and two-star generals and colonels. They guessed that they'd get down to Australia, park their airplanes, and tell the people there the plane was broken and they were going to have to stay there a week.

So I went down as the commanding general's

personal test pilot [Laughter] with this sort of letter of marque against these poor guys. And when they came in, if the mechanics at Eagle Farm said the plane was cleared to go, I was supposed to take it up and test it, bring it in, and if it seemed to me to be all right, they had to get out in twenty-four hours. Well, the fact is nobody ever showed up. I mean, the air force was dead wrong. These guys didn't want to go back to Australia. They wanted to go home. But I sat down there with a house all of my own and this enormous library for three months and nothing else to do but read.

II. PROFESSIONAL CAREER

VASQUEZ: You were in college then in Hawaii. What school there did you attend?

BURBY: The University [of Hawaii].

VASQUEZ: What did you study?

BURBY: Just general freshman stuff. I worked on the newspaper, on the school newspaper, as an editorial writer. It was the only editorial writing I ever did, I ever had done, before I came here. And then, after a while, it became

fairly clear that the GI Bill wasn't quite enough to pay all the bills.

So I went down to the local morning paper. First thing I thought about was driving a cab part time. But the union wouldn't allow that. I was trying to think of something that I could do without having any kind of special training. I thought, Well, maybe the newspaper. Sure enough, they were short of copy editors, people who could correct spelling and correct grammar and write headlines.

Journalism in Hawaii

VASQUEZ: Is this the [Honolulu] Advertiser?

BURBY: The Advertiser. So I started working nights there. My grades weren't very good in school after that, because I really was more interested in that than I was in the university. But I stuck with it. You know, the standard freshman, sophomore English, history. History particularly. My counselor was my history teacher.

VASQUEZ: Did you finish your B.A. in Hawaii?

BURBY: No, I never finished college.

VASQUEZ: You never finished college. Interesting.

BURBY: No, when I had two years in, I was managing the

United Press Bureau by then.

VASQUEZ: In Hawaii.

BURBY: In Hawaii. I had left after two years. I was planning to transfer to Stanford [University], actually. I mean, I had that all set up with Prescott Bush, who was the head of the journalism department.

VASQUEZ: Why Stanford?

BURBY: I had a lot of friends who had gone there. And it had a good reputation.

Journalism in Korea

VASQUEZ: You wanted to study journalism at Stanford?

BURBY: Uh-huh. So, everything was going very smoothly. I came back one night from a wedding, and I stopped off at the bureau--this is a Sunday night--to see if anything had happened. I started reading the wire, and the North Koreans had attacked across the thirty-eighth parallel.

That was very funny, because a few weeks before that the air national guard there had called me. They were going to get jets, they said, and they needed people with time and experience in single-engine airplanes. I had some of that. They asked me if I wanted to come

in. That was very attractive to me. I mean, the jet was something that occurred long after I left the service. They said I would be a flight leader and an instructor. That sounded like great fun. So I filled out an application and put it in an envelope and I put it in my drawer. The first thing I did after I read this story [Laughter] about the North Koreans attacking, was go over and get that envelope out of the drawer and tear it up. [Laughter] And then I wound up in Korea.

VASQUEZ: You did, anyway.

BURBY: For the United Press.

VASQUEZ: As a journalist?

BURBY: Yeah. They sent me over there. I guess the Philippine Sea left Pearl Harbor within a matter of days, and I went out on the Philippine Sea.

VASQUEZ: Now, here you are, deep into journalism now . . .

BURBY: Uh-huh.

Life Commitment to Journalism

VASQUEZ: Where and when do you think you think you made the commitment to journalism as your primary life activity?

BURBY: Oh, I think it was made before I went to Korea.

I think the commitment was always there. I just didn't pay a lot of attention to it. I mean, I studied Japanese at the university. It was my language because I had it in mind to go back out to the Far East and report.

VASQUEZ: This is even before you started working at the Advertiser, is that right?

BURBY: Yeah. When the United Press said that they wanted me to go to Korea, it seemed to me that was probably the end of college, at least for the time being. And I called up my counselor, and I said, "What am I going to do now?" And he said, "Go to Korea." He said, "You read a lot." He said, "You really don't have to finish college unless you want to." I wish he hadn't said that to me because that became my excuse for not going back for years after that.

VASQUEZ: Are you ever sorry you didn't?

BURBY: Not anymore. I'll tell you, in my generation, if you didn't finish college it used to bug everybody, including me. We've got a couple of high-ranking executives here who went into journalism the same way I did and decided that they were doing things that a lot of college

graduates would kill for a chance to do. And they just stayed with it. But in 1959, I got a Nieman Fellowship, and I went back and spent a year at Harvard [University] and when I left I said, "Okay. That settles that account."

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Now this is after you've been a journalist for the United Press, you've been to Korea, they . . .

BURBY: Been to Korea. Then I worked for some years back at the Advertiser, covering labor and management and defense. That was an interesting combination, because in those days the important labor over there was the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union [ILWU], which was all "commies" by everybody's definition. And then I'd go from there out to Pearl Harbor and poke around in the defense beat. But that was a great learning experience. Hawaii was a very interesting place to be from 1950 to 1954. 'Fifty-one, I mean, to '54. Because I left Korea after a year. I made a parachute jump and I did a couple of other dumb things.

VASQUEZ: In your role as journalist?

BURBY: Yeah.

Covering Labor in Hawaii

VASQUEZ: You were parachuting?

BURBY: Yeah. So I went back and the Advertiser needed somebody to cover labor. They had just been judged the worst labor newspaper in the United States by Business Week. On a list of one hundred newspapers, they were at the bottom. So I took them seriously and began to cover labor seriously. I learned an awful lot then. I think I learned things that still apply to some of the problems you see in the United States today.

I'll just give you one little example. During negotiations between, say, the sugar plantations and the ILWU, when the day's negotiations were over, the management representatives all went to the local club and had a few belts and went home for dinner. The union people all went back to the union hall and started working on the next day's negotiations. Now, is there a pattern of that that has let the Japanese get ahead of us in automobiles? That's giving us a lot of trouble today? I think so.

VASQUEZ: What are the causes of labor's problems, if you're saying that the management has this

[tendency] . . .

BURBY: Oh, I think labor started going to the club after negotiations after a while.

VASQUEZ: Same club?

BURBY: Sure. But I think there's also an element--and probably a strong element--of truth in what you'd find some labor people saying these days, that they caused their own problems. They got wages up to a point where people were so prosperous they didn't have to care about unions. Then another generation comes along. So I think there's an element of truth to that.

But I started to say that Hawaii was interesting. Not just interesting, absolutely fascinating, because there was the unanswered question of who was going to run the islands. Was it going to be the ILWU? Or was it going to be the old, very conservative management? Or was there going to be something in between? It was a sociological dream. You know, it had all the elements: money and power and real people and fascinating characters like Harry [A.R.] Bridges.

Well, in 1954, the legislature went democratic. And the newspaper I worked for en-

dorsed Democrats for the first time in its history. And that was the end of the fight. After that it was pretty clear. It was going to be something in between. Everything would be negotiated and compromised. Then it got dull and we left. After that, it was just a pretty place to live and there wasn't much of a challenge.

VASQUEZ: The excitement had been taken away for you?

BURBY: Well, not so much the excitement. It's just that the chance to watch something important to people happen [was gone]. Now, you asked earlier about social conscience. Let me go back a bit. I didn't live on the campus at the university. I roomed with another ex-pilot down in Waikiki. And then we decided to move into a house.

There was a guy reading copy on the Advertiser who had come out of the service and had worked for one of the newspapers in San Francisco, and had been chairman of the guild there [San Francisco/Oakland Newspaper Guild]. And I had come out of the service as an officer, right?

David Young: Influence on Social Thinking

VASQUEZ: What was your rank when you left the service?

BURBY: First Lieutenant. But I was still an officer, and I'd eat in officer's clubs and everybody else had to eat someplace else. And, you know, when you're eighteen, nineteen years old, your head is easily turned by that stuff. This guy--his name was [David] Dave Young--really straightened me out. He had been, as I say, the chairman of the guild in San Francisco. I used to have a lot of long and fascinating talks with David. He was very good at discussing things that he knew. Well, I mean, he didn't convert me completely. Just enough to organize the newspaper I worked for. [Laughter] I think David was the first person with a social conscience I ever spent a lot of time with. I have no idea whether he understood what he was doing, although I'm sure he must have. And as I say, he didn't proselytize me. He made a lot of pat answers suddenly not real answers at all, and opened up a lot of places where I realized I had to do a lot more investigation before I could come to any kind of conclusion.

VASQUEZ: Did you keep that relationship for a long time?

BURBY: Uh, yeah. I mean, I used to see him everyday at

the paper.

VASQUEZ: I mean after you left Hawaii.

BURBY: No. After we left Hawaii, he stayed in Hawaii until we moved to Sacramento to work for [Governor Edmund G.] Pat Brown, which came . . . [Interruption]

VASQUEZ: We were talking about Dave Young, whom you roomed with in Hawaii and whom you identify as someone who, while he didn't form your political outlook, helped you put things in perspective. Do you want to tell me a little more about that? Your respective ages, that kind of thing?

BURBY: Well, I guess Dave was well into his forties then. He had been in the service, too. And he had been, as I think I said, the chairman--and I suppose chief negotiator--for the San Francisco/Oakland Newspaper Guild. Things looked a lot different to him than they did to somebody who had gone directly, practically directly, from high school into being an officer and a gentleman and a lot different from other people. He straightened me out on that. He was a complex guy. He was very smooth. He was a handsome man, big man. He had a sort of working man's outlook

on things. I mean, for him, he didn't have a strong ideological bent. It was just him against the bosses over how much money newspapermen were entitled to for their work. I mean, some of his motivation might have been that he had an interest in his salary.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Liberals and Conservatives

BURBY: You know, that's being too facetious. He was a good craftsman. He was good at what he did, and he was very impatient with supervisors who didn't work as hard as he did or weren't as good as he was. He felt strongly about the newspaper business. So, as I say, I learned a lot. I owe David a lot for getting me off that officer-and-gentleman track and on to asking a lot of questions. You know, I have come, over the years-- this is not anything that I started out with-- I've come over the years to my own definition of a liberal and a conservative. A conservative, as I see them now, is someone who has asked all the questions that there are to ask and has all the answers. A liberal is someone who is still

asking questions. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Is it because he is more profound, or because he's slower and he's not asking the right questions?

BURBY: Well, that's to be revealed. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: At the time, what was your perception of a liberal or a conservative, do you remember, back then?

BURBY: I don't think I had one, because we didn't have liberals and conservatives in Hawaii. We had communists and Neanderthals. I mean, it was very black and very white. And Hawaii was, in those days was almost classless. It was so comfortable there. There was very little resentment of power, on Oahu. Now, out on the plantations it was different.

VASQUEZ: Now you come back to the states, what year now?

BURBY: 'Fifty-six.

VASQUEZ: 'Fifty-six. Is this when you go to work for the [San Francisco] Chronicle?

BURBY: Right.

VASQUEZ: Can you tell me about that?

BURBY: Well, it was a newspaper that just before World War II started was a real newspaper and had a

good reputation. I should have done more research before I agreed to go to work for them. Because by the time I got there, it had already deteriorated a lot. It was not a serious paper. Of course, it's hard to be serious in San Francisco because not much goes on in San Francisco. It's a hard city to cover. You have to manufacture a lot of things to make it sound interesting. I mean, it's a beautiful place. I'm not knocking it. And it's maybe the most comfortable place to live in the entire world. But as a newspaper town, I found it, after a while, unsatisfying.

VASQUEZ: Who hired you?

BURBY: A fellow named [Abraham] Abe Mellinkoff. Well, it happened the way almost all of these newspaper transactions happen. You know, newspaper clippings are the way people are hired, not their smile or anything else. It's what they've written and how they write it and, to this day that is our first criterion when we're looking for somebody. You can teach people things they don't know, but teaching them to write is very hard if there isn't a feel for the language.

That, you have to start with. Because if what you write isn't in any degree compelling, then you're wasting your time. Especially as time goes on, when you're now competing with so many other sources of information, it's got to be interesting. You've got to make people want to read what it is you're writing.

Labor and Hawaiian Politics

VASQUEZ: What did you submit?

BURBY: Some clippings. I haven't the vaguest idea of what they would have been. I think one of them would have been maybe the most important story I ever covered.

VASQUEZ: Which was . . .

BURBY: It was a strike down on the big island, on a sugar plantation. I got interested in it because neither the union nor the company wanted to talk to me about it. Now usually, one or the other wanted to tell you what the real story was. They [the editors] didn't seem terribly interested. In those days, a trip to the big island and a motel bill of three or four dollars a day [Laughter] was a lot. They weren't interested in investing that on speculation. But I also

happened to be the volcano reporter for the paper. In Hawaii, you know, the volcano is a really big deal. It's like the Superbowl.

VASQUEZ: And the duties of the volcano reporter are what? To monitor it?

BURBY: Go down and cover the volcano.

VASQUEZ: When it erupts?

BURBY: Hawaiian Airlines used to have standby lists. It was a big social event. When the volcano erupted, they called people on this list. The people got up if it was in the middle of the night. Got dressed and went down to the airport and got on the airplane and flew down to the big island for the party.

Our publisher was one of those people. At one of these parties when the volcano was about to die down, I said to him, "As long as I'm over here, I'm going down to Honokaa, see what's going on there." He said, "Fine." So I went down. I spent a week there. And what was going on there was a fight between an old-fashioned plantation manager, a guy who wore a calvary hat around and riding boots and carried a crop.

VASQUEZ: An American?

BURBY: Well, he was a Scottish national, but he was a haole. And he wasn't going to take any crap from brown people.

VASQUEZ: Which were primarily what? Filipinos?

BURBY: Filipinos and Japanese.

VASQUEZ: Any Hawaiian natives?

BURBY: Well, it was a strange mix. It was Filipinos, Japanese. . . . And there were a lot of Portuguese in the plantation force then, especially on the big island.

VASQUEZ: Any native Hawaiians in the labor force?

BURBY: A scattering. The shop steward was a Nisei who had been in the Hundredth Combat Battalion and had a silver star, and had lost most, but not all, of his left arm. And he was not going to take any crap from a haole. I mean, I didn't notice that at first. Everybody else on the plantation started talking to me about what was happening. Nobody was terribly happy about it, but nobody wanted to see the Nisei lose. And it had been going on for a long time.

So I went back and wrote the story and finished it on a Sunday afternoon and took it in. The Sunday people wouldn't touch it with a

ten-foot pole. [Laughter] In the first place, a very long story. I think it ran about five thousand words. Maybe it had been the longest story I ever wrote. So they called the editor at home, and he told them to send me out with the story. He sat there, and he went through this page by page. What went through his mind he never did tell me. But he picked up the phone and he called the Sunday desk and he said he wanted this started across the top of page one. And he wanted it then jumped inside in a block. And he didn't want a word changed. So I went back and they did that.

The next morning, the publisher called the office and told them he wanted me fired for writing this kind of garbage which assumed that there were two sides to an argument when labor was involved on one side. Then he started getting phone calls from the company that owned the plantation, thanking him for this great public service. [Laughter] Because they hadn't the vaguest idea what was causing the strike. Then I started getting calls from the union. [Laughter] They didn't know, either. Well,

by the time I got to the office, the publisher had called back and said, "Ignore that first telephone call." It wasn't until quite some time after that that I discovered what had happened.

But I think that episode persuaded me--and maybe this is true only in that circumstance, it may not work everywhere, but I've always tried to operate on this premise--that if you got it right, it doesn't make any difference what other people think about it. Your duty is to write it the way you see it, as long as you've been careful about it, as long as you know what you're doing. That's the duty of a reporter.

You know, this editor did something else for me once. When I left Korea, I came back on an ambulance plane. It was a very tough trip because there were three people on the plane that the doctors and the nurses weren't sure would make it. And this cabal got set up between the crew and the doctors and the nurses. They were going to get these guys back, get them back to California. Well, one of them died before we got back to Hawaii. And the second one died between Hawaii and Travis [Air Force Base].

And the third guy died on the final approach.

So, I sat down and wrote a story about that in San Francisco. I handed it in, and United Press said, "Well, we can't run that. It makes war seem too horrible." Well, mind you, this is twenty-five years ago. How things have changed. You know, I had left the war then. United Press had sent me back to Hawaii, and I gave the editor a carbon of this thing. He ran it the next day across the top of the page. The funny part of it was that the Associated Press picked it up [Laughter] and put it on the wire. Anyway, he was a great old man. His name was Raymond Coll.

Years at the San Francisco Chronicle

VASQUEZ: Now, you're at the [San Francisco] Chronicle?

BURBY: The Chronicle.

VASQUEZ: What were you assigned? What was your beat?

BURBY: Well, just general assignment, courts, sensational stuff, whatever. It was pretty dull, [Laughter] I'll tell you.

Studies at Harvard

VASQUEZ: How long were you there? Until you went to work for Brown?

BURBY: No. I was there for three years. And the last

part of the three years, the city hall reporter got sent off on some other kind of an assignment, so I went up and filled in at city hall. It was the first time and last time I ever had a white-collar beat. I mean, where there was no alternative but going in and talking to people who were involved in city hall, as opposed to real people, day in and day out. So, I began to think maybe the only way I was ever going to get out of there would be to get a fellowship of some kind. And I applied for a Nieman Fellowship. And son of a gun, I got it.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember what writing you submitted for that? Because you also submit writing for Nieman.

BURBY: Yes, and I have no idea. You know, there may be a file of that somewhere, but I would not know. We've moved around so much. As you can see, we've only started moving around. [Laughter] So then that was in the fall of '59 when we went back there. And came back in the spring of '60.

One of the editors on the Chronicle lied to me one day about something very important, or that I thought was very important. And that very

afternoon, Hale Champion, who had worked at the Chronicle. . . . He had been back on a Nieman and was one of the people who encouraged me to apply for it. [He] called and said they were going to make some changes up in the governor's office and they needed a press secretary and was I interested? It just seemed like the perfect answer.

III. GOVERNOR BROWN'S PRESS SECRETARY

VASQUEZ: You were saying earlier that journalists get hired by their newsclippings.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

Appointment to Brown Staff

VASQUEZ: Hale Champion became a part of [Governor Edmund G. "Pat"] Brown [Sr.'s] staff as a result of an article he wrote in the Reporter . . .

BURBY: Yes, right.

VASQUEZ: . . . as I understand, according to [Governor] Brown's interviews. You came in as a result of Hale Champion knowing you.

BURBY: Right.

VASQUEZ: Where did you meet him?

BURBY: At the Chronicle.

VASQUEZ: It [your appointment] wasn't as a result of you

knowing the governor, him reading your material?

BURBY: No. Well, there were a couple of other things in between. Hale was at the Chronicle when I got there, doing some political stuff backing up [Earl C.] "Squire" Behrens. But doing a lot of general assignment things. Then Hale went off on a Nieman right after I got there. Then he came back and, you know, we saw quite a bit of each other, at the paper and socially.

Then when Pat Brown decided to run, [Frederick G.] Fred Dutton put together a sort of loose committee of people to draft speeches for him on one subject or another. I did a couple of those drafts. I guess I met Pat once in that whole time. But, no, Hale was the one. . . . When he left the press secretary's job to go to executive secretary, he needed somebody else, I said, "Sure, put me on the list."

VASQUEZ: When were you appointed?

BURBY: I don't remember the exact date. All I remember is that I got there in time to take off with the governor and a couple of his people for Los Angeles for a trip that Adlai Stevenson was talking on for [John F.] Kennedy. So it was

in the fall of 1960, maybe October.

The Sacramento Press Corps

VASQUEZ: What was the composition of the press corps in the governor's office at the time? How was it organized and who were the main players in that? How did your coming in change any of that, or did it?

BURBY: Not at first. I mean, I was very humble. [Laughter] I didn't want to cause any trouble. [Earl] "Squire" Behrens was the dean of the press corps. Morrie Landsberg was the Associated Press bureau chief. Morrie had been born in Sacramento, gone away during World War II as a war correspondent and turned down every other job the Associated Press offered him. And he came home and ran the AP bureau there. If you want me to, I'll tell you more about Maury. He's a very special guy. [James C.] Jim Anderson was running the United Press bureau. [Herbert L.] Pete Phillips, whom I remember was a very precise writer, precise face, precise dresser. When I think of Pete, I think of a man with a martini glass in one hand and a cigarette in a holder in the other. He was the chief political reporter

for the Sacramento Bee.

VASQUEZ: Who was there from the L.A. Times at the time?

BURBY: [Robert] Bob Blanchard. And, you know, this is terrible to say, I can't remember whether [Richard C.] Bergholz came up then, whether he was there then, or not.

VASQUEZ: He was. I think he was there from about '58 to around '66, actually.

BURBY: Okay. Well, because Blanchard was the one that I spent most of the time with and I got to know Dick more gradually. Boy, the first thing that goes is the memory. Oh, Jack [S.] McDowell was sort of the heavyweight of the press corps. The rest of the people pretty much covered politics there as politics rolled by. McDowell was more into investigative reporting. There was something there then called the Capitol News Service. Boy, these names just. . . . I haven't thought of these names . . .

VASQUEZ: We'll come back [to it]. And I've made up a list that I think will help you with some of these names.

BURBY: I can see their faces.

The Brown Press Staff

VASQUEZ: Who were the people in the governor's press staff, or people having to do with the press, television--which, of course, was only coming into politics in a heavy way then--when you got there?

BURBY: When I got there, there was a young fellow named Lee Nichols, who had come up from Los Angeles and had been in television down here. This was a sort of prefabricated house that I moved into. I mean, Hale had hired Nichols and had decided that we needed somebody who understood electronic media. So he was the associate press secretary and I was the press secretary. And that was it. There were just the two of us.

VASQUEZ: Just the two of you?

BURBY: There was a guy from the Fresno Bee, Roger [Ellingson] something, who came in a little later and didn't stay very long. He eventually went to work for Pacific Gas and Electric as a lobbyist. But that was pretty much the size of the operation. And it consisted almost entirely of press releases and press conferences, period.

VASQUEZ: Hale Champion, in his oral history, says there

are two kinds of journalists. "There are those who are genuinely observers, who are not seeking to influence the outcome. They're really trying to provide people with good information with which to draw their own conclusions about the outcome. Then there are people like me," he says, "who get into journalism because they aren't affecting the outcome--they're interested in having their perceptions help shape outcomes." Which were you when you went to work as press secretary?

BURBY: I think I was probably the first kind, to some extent.

VASQUEZ: How were you able to reconcile that with being in a political administration that had to put out [information], and many times, perhaps, shape opinions?

BURBY: Well, I went up there pretty naive. I saw myself as going up to build a bridge between [Laughter] the governor and the press and the public; I was going to be somewhere in the middle. I remember Blanchard disabused me of that so fast. He came in to do a kind of profile of the new press secretary, and at a couple of points along the line

he asked me whether I was telling the truth. I don't think in so many words, but the implication was pretty clear that I was hiding, [that] I was dissembling, and that there was a lot more to it than I was telling.

I was outraged [Laughter] that he would think that of me. And he left. Then I got to thinking about especially the times when I was covering the military in Hawaii, the times I had walked out of the offices of press people, wondering what the truth really was. I mean, knowing that they hadn't really told me [Laughter] everything. Then it dawned on me: There was no bridge. You were either on the one side, or you were on the other side. That was a kindness, in its way. I mean, it disabused me of that nonsense pretty fast. I was the governor's man, and it was a lot easier to operate that way.

Relations with Journalist Colleagues

VASQUEZ: How did your relationships change with your colleagues in journalism? Or did they, now that you were on one side?

BURBY: Well, once I understood [it]. . . . They knew it all along.

VASQUEZ: Right.

BURBY: Once I understood it, it was no problem. You know, it's not so much professional as an awful lot of it is personal. There are some people you relate to better than others. I mentioned Morrie Landsberg. I still think that Morrie came closer than most of the people there to my idea of what a good reporter was and ought to do. He didn't bring a lot of preconceptions to the job, but he never missed anything, either. Morrie also ran a journalism school up there, and you find in it a couple of L.A. Times people here who were in his bureau who wrote about politics as though the politicians were real people and the problems were real problems and Sacramento was a real city.

A lot of people, to this day, reporting out of Sacramento, miss that ingredient. They write almost like archaeologists or people in Sri Lanka who have very little direct bearing on what happens in Los Angeles. That's easy to do, and it's very hard to do the other because Sacramento is, I mean, in many ways, a lot farther from here than four hundred miles.

VASQUEZ: But didn't you tell me that Landsberg had grown up in that area?

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: Insisted on being in that area?

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: So he had an emotional attachment . . .

BURBY: To Sacramento.

VASQUEZ: . . . to Sacramento.

BURBY: Sure.

VASQUEZ: Not only the institutions of power, but Sacramento the place, do you think that had something to do with it?

BURBY: I don't know. No, I think Morrie just understood how to convey a story, understood what the important ingredients were. And one of them was--as we were talking earlier--making it seem real and important and making people want to read it. Bill Boyarsky is one of Morrie's journalism students, if you will. Bill writes that way. He writes for the [Los Angeles] Times now.

VASQUEZ: A lot of journalists say that their journalism training in college, or what have you, becomes almost irrelevant. And this kind of training, like what Landsberg would offer, and your prac-

tical, day-to-day journalistic experiences shapes your journalism ability. Was that the case with you?

BURBY: Yeah. I've spent most of my life telling young people or their parents not to go to journalism school. To go to school and learn something, history, political science (although it's not really a science), English. Spend four years getting a base of something, and then work on the college paper. Because you learn everything you're going to learn in journalism school doing it. You know, writing is one of the things that can be self-taught. It's different from brain surgery in that sense.

VASQUEZ: It's just as painful though, isn't it?

[Laughter]

BURBY: [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: So you were the press secretary all the time you were in the [Brown] administration?

BURBY: Yes.

The "Taint" of Politics

VASQUEZ: Because we're going to come back to that period in more detail. . . . Then after the '66 election, what did you do?

BURBY: Well, we had a number of choices. One would have been to stay in Sacramento and. . . . See, in those days, you could not easily go back into journalism from politics.

VASQUEZ: Why?

BURBY: Well, I fooled around with NBC [National Broadcasting Company] for awhile. They were interested in having me come to work for them as a reporter. I wound up actually going back and talking to Reuben Frank in New York and spending a day and an evening with him. I did a screen test and all that stuff. Finally, they decided that I was tainted, that I was identified with one side or another of stories that I would be covering and they didn't want any part of that. Now, of course, you see a lot of crossovers, and we'll get into this in more detail, later.

VASQUEZ: Jody Powell.

BURBY: Jody Powell and the young woman [Diane Sawyer] on CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] who worked for Richard Nixon for so many years.

But in those days, that was not [the case] I think the Sacramento Bee had a stricture. I mean, it was written policy somewhere

not to do that. Now they have at least one person that I know of who has been in politics. But, at any rate, it just wasn't done in those days. So our choice was public relations in Sacramento or go to Washington where the Johnson administration was still a Democratic administration. And if we were going to be tainted, we'd go back and enjoy it. [Laughter]

United States Department of Transportation

VASQUEZ: Dive in all the way, huh?

BURBY: So we did. I went back there and worked for the Teacher Corps for a few months. They put the Transportation Department together, and I went over there and worked for Alan Boyd, who was the first secretary for . . . well, until after the '68 election. Then I worked for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for a year. Learned all about banking. Then I wrote a book about transportation. [The Great American Motion Sickness] And then I went to work for National Journal as one of the editors, and wound up editor and publisher. [I] left there in '75 and consulted for three years, and then came out here, went to work for the [Los Angeles] Times.

Publisher/Editor of National Journal

VASQUEZ: Let's talk a little bit about the National Journal. I know you feel strongly about the content and the format in which it was presented. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

BURBY: The idea of the magazine was that process is boring to most political and government writers. Which is a shame, because process is the most important part of it to people who need to know what is going on in government.

Rather than have a White House correspondent and a House correspondent and a Senate correspondent, we covered things by issue. And we would send out one person who would take a look at this issue at the White House, interviewing people there. Then take what he learned there up to the House, look at it from the House point of view, and factor in the White House point of view, and so on down the line through all the lobbies, through all the law firms that were involved in something. What we were aiming at in every story was to try and figure out what were the parts of the process that made a deci-

sion on an issue turn this way or that way? I was absolutely fascinated by it. I had never done that kind of journalism before. And it turned out it could be done.

The problem was, it was very expensive. I mean, we used to let people spend six weeks wandering around [Laughter] Washington without producing anything. And our budget was tight, and so usually if they spent that much time, we made them write long, which made a lot of the stories very boring. But, I mean, it was the only way we could get back our investment.

[Laughter] What we were aiming at was to produce a magazine that wouldn't need bylines--I mean, we used bylines--but whose coverage would be so complete, and ring so true, that every point made in it was proved in the same article.

I find myself doing it. I'll read a story on arms control in the New York Times. If it's written by Michael Gordon, I'll say to myself, "Okay." I mean, Gordon knows what he's doing. If it's written by somebody else, then I'll have some doubts about it. Well, that's a bad habit to get into, but I do it. We wanted a story that

would be okay no matter whether it had a byline or not. I think we made it, and in the process persuaded a lot of people in Washington who weren't quite sure what we were up to at the beginning, that that's all we were up to. So now the thing has become a kind of institution in Washington.

I remember one of the great ironies was that, you do have to go around trying to prove some things to yourself. The question of whether I really was tainted bothered me a little. I mean, I had gone through the Nixon campaign in 1962, which I thought was a vintage year, and found myself running National Journal and found the Nixon White House ordering a few more copies of the National Journal every week until they got up to about sixty. Which was not only financially very nice, but the reason they were doing it was they were getting more straight information out of National Journal about their government than they were getting from their department heads. I thought that was kind of nice. I didn't brag to anybody about it, but I enjoyed the thought.

VASQUEZ: What was the size of the staff in these days when you were at the Journal?

BURBY: Well, it depends on when you . . .

VASQUEZ: The writing staff.

BURBY: Probably twenty-five or thirty, at the height. To just keep the magazine from going under, I had to cut the staff to fourteen one day. I was sufficiently unaware of what was going on around me that I went in and did that on February 14, without appreciating the fact that that was Saint Valentine's Day. So you know what became of it. But the magazine made it and the people who left all landed on their feet. The people who stayed have made a very good book out of that. And I've enjoyed what they were doing.

VASQUEZ: What year did you leave?

BURBY: 'Seventy-five.

Private and Public Sector Consulting

VASQUEZ: And then you did consulting?

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: What kinds of things?

BURBY: I did some consulting for the Office of Technology Assessment, Senate budget committees, for a lot of environmental, for some private consulting

firms, usually running research projects.

The first one I got involved with had to do with the question of what would happen in New Jersey if they started drilling for oil off shore and built a floating nuclear power plant off of Atlantic City. And this may sound funny today, but this was a serious proposal. They later did lease contracts for drilling. It went up through the Baltimore trough and drilled some test holes, and nothing came of that and they took off.

But this was process stuff, too. You couldn't get what would happen as the result of oil drilling--I mean, what the impact would be--out of a book. Because the kinds of things that are important to assessing that just aren't in books. New Jersey thought they would be overwhelmed with roughnecks and the economy would boom and all kinds of things would happen. When we got to checking with oil company executives, we found that nothing was going to happen. Their pattern would be to fly their offshore crews up from Louisiana, put them directly on helicopters and send them out to the rigs and leave them there for whatever period of time, bring them

back and send them home. They wouldn't even buy chewing gum in New Jersey. So, it's another case of the obligation of reporting.

VASQUEZ: So you've always maintained certain principles of investigation and of presentation in whatever you do that you got from journalism?

BURBY: Yeah.

Comparing Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

VASQUEZ: Before we leave Washington, how did working in the halls of power in Washington differ from working in the halls of power in Sacramento?

BURBY: Well, in Washington I was on the outside. In Sacramento, I was on the inside.

VASQUEZ: Even in a Democratic administration?

BURBY: Yes, because the secretary of transportation is not in the White House. When Alan Boyd was sworn in as secretary. . . . Mind you, the Vietnam War was going on. That was fascinating, too. I mean, the people inside that government who were dead set against that war and couldn't talk about it. And in the same office, people who were all for that war and wouldn't talk to the people who were dead set against it.

When Alan Boyd was sworn in as secretary of

transportation, President [Lyndon Baines] Johnson shook his hand and said, "Call me if you get in trouble." The implication being, "Don't call me unless you get in trouble." And, that was the difference from the governor's office. The California Highway Patrol was an office somewhere in Sacramento. They did their own thing and they called us if they got in trouble. [Laughter] So that was the main difference.

VASQUEZ: How about in terms of the journalists in the two cities, and how they interact with those on the inside?

BURBY: I'm not sure I understand the question.

VASQUEZ: I guess what I'm trying to get at is, there is a subculture around those in power that journalists will gravitate around or have some kind of connection to. Sometimes it's a bar or a restaurant that they go to. I know you wrote a very fascinating article a few years ago about such a place in Sacramento. Is there that kind of closeness in Washington, or is it an alienating atmosphere?

BURBY: Oh, sure. I mean, the Sans Souci restaurant used to be. . . . It would remind you of

Versailles. The micrometers by which they measured whether your table was in a good place or a bad place. [Laughter] And that was where the Johnson White House staff went to lunch and where Art Buchwald went to lunch and the major players in Washington went to lunch.

[End Tape 1, Side B].

IV. MEDIA IN THE BROWN ADMINISTRATION

[Session 2, August 24, 1987]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

The Capitol News Service

VASQUEZ: When we last talked, you were telling me about becoming the [Governor Edmund G.] Brown [Sr.] press secretary and going to Sacramento from San Francisco. You were describing the [main] players in the Sacramento press corps. There were some people whose names didn't come to mind and you wanted to put them into the record. Do you want to expand on that now?

BURBY: One of the places we were talking about was Capitol News Service. The head of it was Henry [C.] MacArthur. It's funny how those names drift in and out; it just came to me over the weekend. And the other one in the operation was [Edwin S.] Ed Capps.

VASQUEZ: You were appointed in 1960?

BURBY: Late 1960.

VASQUEZ: You got to the governor's press office. What was it like? What did you find? What were the

resources that you had?

BURBY: Well, we had an AP [Associated Press] wire so that we could keep up with what was going on outside the office. I had an assistant by then. I think he was called "associate press secretary." His name was Lee Nichols. He had been involved in television in southern California and, I think, radio, NBC [National Broadcasting Corporation] as I recall. He was the associate press secretary for electronic media, of which there wasn't much when I got there. But we can get into that later. We had a pretty good suite of offices. Hale Champion was probably the most important resource because he had just left the press secretary's job and it was pretty easy to get answers to questions [from him] because he was just around the corner. He had moved up to executive secretary by then. And the governor, himself, was a very open guy. From a press secretary's point of view, too open in many ways. I used to think back in those days and compare him to other politicians. From the point of a view of a press secretary, the one thing that he lacked was any sense of ruthlessness.

Governor Brown as Material for a Press Secretary

VASQUEZ: Can you give me an example of something that illustrates that?

BURBY: I'll give you an example that doesn't involve the governor, but it involves [President James E.] Jimmy Carter. There was a story out of the '76 convention when he was still trying to make up his mind about a running mate. You know the combination of [Robert] Bob Novak and Rowland Evans back in Washington, they do a column for the Washington Post. Well, one morning when the big guessing game at the convention was who the vice-president was going to be, Novak went up to him, broke through this circle of people around Carter and said, as I remember the story, "Governor, who are you going to pick for vice president?" And Carter looked at him, and said, "Well, I'm not going to tell you. I might tell Rowland Evans, but I'm not going to tell you." It was an absolutely ruthless thing for a candidate to have said.

Pat [Governor Edmund J. Brown, Sr.] just didn't have that. If someone asked him a question, he would answer it. Now, on the one

hand, that's marvelous. I mean, that's the kind of thing you want from politicians. But from a press secretary's point of view, it represented a lack of ability to control the flow of things. When that happens, it's always a surprise. Sometimes details got left out that might have supported a conclusion that the governor had arrived at. And when that wasn't there, then people were just left to speculate about what kind of support that conclusion had and what were the facts and so forth. So, you began to think that way as a press secretary. You knew if it was going to come out, it all ought to be out. People used to complain during those years about leaks. In my present job, I think leaks are wonderful. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: [Laughter] I would imagine. But what did leaks mean then?

BURBY: Leaks meant talking about something before it had actually been put together and taking a chance on its falling apart. And if it was important, that was always bad news. So, they would come to me and they would say, "How on earth did this get in the newspaper?" I said, "Well, it's a very

natural progression from here to there." I said, "If you don't want it in the paper, you don't say it or don't do it."

Early Relations with Electronic Media

VASQUEZ: Was it the electronic media, or the print media that you had to watch out for?

BURBY: Both. See, every night in Sacramento there used to be a place called the El Mirador, which had a first-floor bar. So it was easy to get into and easy to get out of. And the place just filled up with people, full of gossip, night after night: newspapermen and legislators and the governor's staff. And the Senator was still functioning as a hotel in those days. Same thing. There was a bar up the street and, of course, Frank Fats, although that tended, generally, to be the preserve of the legislature after hours.

The very nature of the business of politics is information. That's what they use instead of script. That's the currency of politics, that's what has value. If you don't have any information, then nobody pays any attention to you. So when you get into that situation, you have to start talking. [Laughter] Everybody in

the governor's office was a resource for the press secretary.

Judicial appointments were a big item. And there was a secretary for judicial appointments who went through the backgrounds, made a lot of phone calls to friends and not-friends about somebody who the governor had in mind appointing. There's a lot of interest in judicial appointments in the state. So that was a kind of staple of the press secretary's operation. The legislative secretary, we used to spend a lot of time on him.

Public Relations with the Legislature

VASQUEZ: The legislative secretary was Julian Beck, is that correct?

BURBY: No, when I got there it was [Alexander] Alex Pope. Pope was there and stayed for about a year. And then, Paul Ward took his place and was there to the end. And a fellow named Frank [A.] Mesplé, accent aigu--marvelous guy, worked with Paul. He was a political scientist by training, and he had come up there on a fellowship. But he came into the governor's office as an academic to do political science first-hand and refused to

leave; [Laughter] he got fascinated with the process. He was so good at it. So, he just stayed on as a staff member.

My relations with the legislature mostly, almost entirely, were through Paul Ward and Frank Mesplé. You know, there is a line between the executive and the legislative, and people cross that line all the time. The constitution sets the line up, but you've got to walk back and forth across it or you'd never get anything done. And rightly or wrongly, I always felt that the press office had no business crossing that line--unless it was ordered to--because we were just too visible. We were a sort of public arm of the governor's office, and all of those conversations were private conversations until whatever goal they were trying to get to had actually been worked out, until both sides were satisfied. And it always seemed to me that wandering around, talking to legislators, was for a press secretary [like] talking out of school. So, I dealt through Paul and Frank.

Television Comes to Sacramento

VASQUEZ: And yet, you were saying a few minutes ago that

information was a very important currency. Aren't there times when the governor's office would like to help some legislators more than others have [certain] information?

BURBY: Oh, yes. It's hard to imagine that there was a time without television, I mean without a lot of television. There was television in 1960. But when I got there, my impression is that the only television was local television, Sacramento television. And, of course, Sacramento in those days, even though the demographics don't bear this out, was a kind of company town. Whatever the legislature did and whenever the legislature got into a fight with the governor, or the Republicans were scrapping with Democrats, that was important news on the local television. But there was very little of the kind of almost minute-by-minute coverage you get nowadays out of the national networks.

VASQUEZ: How about in San Francisco and Los Angeles? How was the legislature represented in television then?

BURBY: They would send crews to Sacramento--it's not a very long drive; it's about eighty, eighty-five

miles--for press conferences or for special occasions. And, of course, this changed. I wasn't there then, but during the Caryl Chessman case, that was a ripe story and a lot of television sort of flowed into town. And when that was over, they flowed back out. I'm talking about permanent television, the kind you get at the White House now, where there are cameras in the press room twenty-four hours a day and they never take them away. If they need reinforcements, they're just, ten, fifteen minutes away, more cameras. It wasn't like that in those days.

That changed during the time I was there. So that in 1965, or maybe early '66, we took over a room on the first floor in the Capitol and began to remodel it and soundproof it and bury plugs in the floor that you could plug a radio or a tape recorder into. We built a couple of tiers, platforms, in the rear for cameras. And it had a stage and a podium and a flag and the whole thing. That became the "press conference room." Up until that time the press conferences were set up pretty much wherever there was room.

VASQUEZ: Who organized that?

BURBY: I did.

VASQUEZ: It was your idea?

BURBY: We had one press conference in there. It was the governor's last press conference after he lost to Ronald Reagan. After that, Reagan took over that room.

VASQUEZ: So it was at the tail-end of the administration that you were doing that?

BURBY: The tail-end, yeah.

Print versus Electronic Media

VASQUEZ: Not early on?

BURBY: No, no. As I say, between 1960 and 1966, that became important. When I got there, it wasn't so important. Now, part of that--I'm wandering away from resources now--but part of the reason for that was that over the years the print press had dominated Sacramento to the point where they had separate press conferences.

The print press would go in first and they'd have a press conference in the governor's office. Then he had a little second office behind his main office, and if the television people wanted anything on film, they went in

there and set up their cameras and repeated the questions that were asked in the print media conference. But television people weren't even allowed to ask questions in that print room.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: This gives me an opportunity to ask you a question that I found very interesting in the [Earl] "Squire" Behrens interview, and among other print journalists of the time. They felt they did all the work, all the real, substantive, intellectual part of journalism. They were the ones who dug up the information to ask the questions. The people that were sent up from the media centers of Los Angeles and San Francisco with cameras, and the fellows with microphones, many times had done very little preparation and would just feed off the journalists' work, and use it as an opportunity to get information. They were more concerned about camera angles, etc. Was that your experience?

BURBY: I'm not sure I would put it that strongly. There was some of that. But, on the other hand, some of the reporters that came up had a feel for politics and worked every bit as hard as any of

print people. Some of them were just pretty faces, as the Squire would have it. But the fact is, they were coverage, whether they did it well or badly.

Again, from a press secretary's point of view, I figured my obligation was to give them the best shot at covering something right that I could. After the '62 election, we disbanded the dual press conference operation. And that caused all kinds of trouble. I mean, Squire Behrens came storming down off the second floor and went back into the governor's office and raised hell about it and shook the governor up. The governor wasn't sure that I knew what I was doing. I wasn't, either, you know. But we made it work.

VASQUEZ: Why did you want to merge the two media?

BURBY: Partly because it seemed to me that second press conference was fraudulent. The governor had already answered the question once. He had rehearsed it and when it was asked a second time in the press conference, it just came out too slick. It wasn't the governor.

VASQUEZ: But wouldn't that be an ideal situation for a press secretary to want to have a second shot at it?

BURBY: The answer was too slick. It misrepresented who the man was.

VASQUEZ: You felt that it was important to project his personality?

BURBY: Giving the answer the way it came to him naturally.

Governor Brown's Political Assets

VASQUEZ: Do you feel that was one of Governor Brown's best political assets?

BURBY: Governor Brown had incredible energy and curiosity. In public, I think at least in my day, he seemed sort of stereotypically the old-fashioned, handshaking, back-slapping politician.

In private, he was an incredible administrator. I mean, he had people from his departments in all the time wanting to know what was going on. He'd do this sometimes on Sunday. "How are things going? How can we help? What about this state hospital? I hear some reports that things aren't going too well there. Can you get me a report on that?" He was a very good governor. He was a much better governor than he was a politician, by my standards. It seemed to me that that aspect of

his life and personality came off better when he was standing in front of a camera thinking about answers to things. That was the press secretary in me. The other was that it just didn't make any sense to divide communications that way. Now, in those days, you have to understand, the press did not take that lying down. In those days, newspaper people used to ask questions with obscenities in them so that television people couldn't [Laughter] use the question on the air.

VASQUEZ: Is that right?

BURBY: In those days, a lot of them were still using those big Speed Graphic cameras. Every once in a while, by accident, one of the flashbulbs would go off right in the eyes of the camera. It would wipe the image out for quite a while, longer than seconds, into minutes. There was a lot of animosity there.

As I remember it at the time, some of it was economic. A lot of people were saying television was going to kill newspapers. But it worked. It worked partly because--and you can use your own judgment about how this would be used--partly because at that time, the San Francisco

Chronicle, which Earl Behrens worked for, was not the financial colossus that it is today and it depended on KRON television for revenue. It owned KRON then. And KRON managed to put in a word for television on this and the Squire eventually saw the justice of our way of doing things and the complaint was sort of dropped. I think it worked much better after that.

Media Campaigns and the Press Secretary

VASQUEZ: Can you tell me a little bit about what kinds of media campaigns or strategies you developed?

BURBY: Well, the first couple of years, and maybe the whole time, we didn't have any particular strategy any more than the Golden Gate Bridge has a strategy. We were the bridge between the governor's office and the press. Almost to the same extent that the press is almost always reactive. Newspaper people don't set their own schedules, somebody else sets them for them. They don't say, "Let's have a press conference at 10:00." Somebody else does that. To that extent, the press office was reactive. You've got time for another example?

VASQUEZ: Yes. Yes, especially if it tells me where you

are, where the press secretary is as decisions are being made in the governor's office that are going to affect a public image or public information. Is it going in that direction?

BURBY: Well, this is a harmless little statement.

VASQUEZ: Go ahead.

BURBY: The '63 State of the State message, which I put together, the transportation section seemed to me needed something else. There were two or three things he was planning to do, and I thought that wasn't quite enough. So I threw in mandatory seat belts. The governor read it, Hale Champion read it. It went to press.

Then, all of a sudden, they realized that one of the auto companies had come in, talked to the governor, and said they were trying to put together a seat belt program. They needed another year. He said, "Fine, I'll wait another year." Well, by this time, the thing is in print. It's too late to do anything about that. This is the reactive position you get into. So there was nothing to be done. The thing was already in print. It was on its way upstairs to the press.

It suddenly occurred to me that the governor's limousine did not have seat belts in it. So, I sent the driver up to get seat belts put in [Laughter] the limousine. That morning, just before the governor went up to the legislature to deliver the message, I got a call from one of the reporters up there. He said, "Does the governor's limousine have seat belts in it?" I said, "Yes, it does." He said, "When were they put in there?" I said, "Recently." [Laughter] He never forgave me for that. I mean, that is the kind of little things you get involved in in that job.

VASQUEZ: And in the relations with the press. . . . You also sometimes have to anticipate . . .

BURBY: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

VASQUEZ: In other words, you can't afford to react to their reaction. It's too late.

BURBY: Yeah. Right. No, you've got to anticipate just . . .

VASQUEZ: Where do you draw the line between anticipating and manipulating?

BURBY: I don't think there is one. It just depends on how important the cause is. If it's terribly

important, it gets to be manipulation.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: So you had these resources available to you?

BURBY: Right.

VASQUEZ: What role did Hale Champion play, and continue to play--or did he?--with media and press?

BURBY: The executive secretary is an important news source and he [Hale] talked to newspapermen. He never gave up his relationships with them, as no executive secretary ought to. In modern-day terms, the executive secretary's relationship is the same with the press as say, Howard Baker has today working with Ronald Reagan.

VASQUEZ: Chief of staff.

BURBY: Chief of staff.

VASQUEZ: Did Hale have that kind of access to Brown?

BURBY: Oh, yes, we all did.

VASQUEZ: You did, as well?

BURBY: Oh, yeah, anytime I had to get an answer to something that had happened that I had missed, for one reason or the other. And, usually, this happened when Hale and the governor, or the governor and one of his department heads was talking about something that they hadn't decided

to do or not to do. Sometimes I got in on those discussions at that stage. But a lot of times I didn't. And then one of the people in the capitol press corps would get wind of that, call and ask about it. I'd just barge in on the governor. There was an absolute open-door policy with Hale and with me and with most of the people. It was a busy office.

Role in Speechwriting

VASQUEZ: In addition to relations with the press--print and electronic--you were involved as part of a group of people in the governor's office in speech writing, people like [Roy] Ringer, [Lucien] Lou Haas, etc. Can you tell me about that group of people, that team? And your role in the speech writing?

BURBY: Well, I had sort of final editing authority. Roy Ringer wrote like an angel. The first speech he ever wrote was just a beautiful speech.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember the topic?

BURBY: I do not. I can see the first page, and I can see the governor's handwriting on it, but I cannot remember what the topic was. It went in to the governor and it stayed in there for about

twenty-four hours. And it came back out and across the top the governor had written, "I am not Adlai Stevenson." [Laughter] That was fairly early on after I got there. And that was an interesting lesson.

You couldn't write what you wanted to for the governor, you had to hear his voice while you were thinking of words. I mean, it had to be something he could accommodate to. It had to be him and you could not throw in your own ideas. They had to be his ideas. And so, there was always a conference before a speech in which you would discuss with him, a) the topic; b) the group he was talking to; and c) what he wanted to say. You could feed your own notions in at that point and he was always glad to have that. But it was his final decision of whether he was going to say this or that. Then you'd go off and write it and send it in to him. Sometimes he'd be uncomfortable with parts of it because of the phrasing or whatever.

Haas wrote a lot of [different speeches]. Haas was a militant speech writer. He wrote good, tough speeches. I was somewhere in

between, I suppose.

VASQUEZ: What would you consider a tough speech, one of Haas's better efforts?

BURBY: Well, I can't remember a lot of the details about it, but he wrote a good, tough speech on Proposition 14.

VASQUEZ: The repeal of the Rumford amendment on . . .

BURBY: Fair Housing. I came to California from Hawaii. Hawaii is not racially perfect, there is a hierarchy, an ethnic hierarchy in Hawaii that's as rigid as any place, but they ignore it and they try not to let it interfere with daily life. Coming into California was quite a shock to me because this state was then--and is now, I think--racist in ways it doesn't even acknowledge or understand.

I can remember going home the night the Rumford Act passed and saying to my wife--this will give you a notion of how youth and enthusiasm can knock your judgment off balance--that the Rumford act had passed and that, "By God, our kids," who then were about eight and four, "might grow up never having to worry about racial tensions." Imagine that?

But it became pretty clear just from reading the paper and from talking to people that . . . that I was off on the wrong track and that there was going to be a lot of trouble over the Rumford Act.

VASQUEZ: And you turned out to be right, didn't you?

BURBY: Well, I knew what was going to happen. The governor may have, too. But he stayed with it. I suppose that what we did in speeches in those days was a lot more militant than it should have been.

VASQUEZ: You also had people like [Richard] Dick Kline involved in the process. He worked under your direction, he also wrote?

BURBY: No. Dick was the travel secretary. Then he went into the Department of Motor Vehicles and was their legislative representative, I think. Then he came back and traveled with the governor. He was from Los Angeles and he understood Los Angeles politics very well. But most of the time, he was the travel secretary.

Now, the travel secretary was kind of an important person in the sense that he was the line of communication with the office when the

governor was on the road. He was sort of blocking for the governor in all kinds of ways: making sure the car was ready when the governor was ready to go; going up and blowing into the microphones before a speech to make sure they were turned on. I'm getting kind of hoarse.

VASQUEZ: Okay. We'll stop for a minute.

[Interruption]

Drafting Governor Brown's Speeches

VASQUEZ: You were outlining how speeches went through the process of being drafted and your role as press secretary in that. Do you want to expand on that?

BURBY: Well, I think we started in the middle. During the course of a week, the governor would get more invitations than he could handle to come and speak. If we were in a situation where we had a program that seemed very important to us and about which we didn't seem to be getting all the coverage we wanted, then we would want to do a speech. Now, this is something that went on before us and still goes on. The staff sits around and says, "Okay, we want to make this point. What kind of a group should we make it to

where it would be most effective?" And then we'd call and see if the governor could appear at the next meeting of some group so that there was a fit between the audience and the message.

All of that, soliciting appearances and going through invitations to speak, that was the first step in speeches. Then you would lay out a schedule for a month in advance. There was a scheduling secretary, too, who handled all of that. Then we would start this process of what to say and talk to the governor about how to say it and then write it and then submit it.

VASQUEZ: He presented the original notions and approved the final product? Is that the way the process worked?

BURBY: First the governor, then the speech writer, the press secretary, and Hale Champion a lot. Champion worked a lot harder than he probably had to because he was awfully good at substance and a very good political mind.

V. BROWN'S 1962 AND 1966 GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGNS

The 1962 Campaign

VASQUEZ: Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the

role of press secretary and how that person reacts to events--and, helps even to shape the image, if not the events, themselves--is to follow the role of the press secretary through one of the most important periods in a politician's life, when he runs for office.

Perhaps, the 1962 campaign for governor against a formidable national figure in the media, in fact--Richard Nixon--would be one place that we could start. Do you want to outline that campaign as you remember it and the role that you played as press secretary, both in strategizing and maybe in certain tactics? Maybe you can address the way questions were drafted for Richard Nixon when he appeared on television, and the decision to have Brown debate Nixon only a limited number of times?

BURBY: Well, on strategy, I just sort of listened. I mean, I had been there for about a year and a half, a very limited amount of time in politics. But the basic strategy of that campaign was that Richard Nixon did not think he was finished in national politics--which, as it turned out later, was the case--and that his

interest was in foreign affairs, first; national affairs, second; and California affairs, third. Hale probably put together what flows from that, that California is, itself, as complicated as most sovereign nations and that you could not get yourself up to speed on California in short order, especially if you weren't terribly interested in California.

Campaign Strategy

So the strategy for that campaign was very simple, that it would all be about California. That you would let the former vice president talk about the big picture and grand designs, and the governor would just simply go on talking to people about California, what was right about the state and what was wrong and what needed to be done. As it turned out, it worked like a charm. My recollection is maybe not precise, but I think that the polls in April of '62 showed the governor about six percentage points ahead and the vote in November had a 6 percent margin. There probably was some shifting within that six percent, but not much.

After it was over, Mervin Field, who was

doing the only political polling in the state at the time, said that it was a great surprise to him how few people changed their minds, how early people made their decisions in that campaign. Part of it was, as I say, the governor sticking to California. The other part was the negative part of the campaign, which was the "stepping stone to the White House" part of the campaign. After the election was over, you got a confirmation of how right that strategy had been when Richard Nixon went in and voted. When he came out, the reporters asked him how he had voted on the propositions, the state propositions, the bond issues. He said, "I didn't vote on them. I didn't understand them." I mean, Hale and the governor had just worked that out long in advance.

Nixon's "Dirty Tricks"

VASQUEZ: Was any effort made to counteract the red-baiting that went on by the Nixon forces?

BURBY: There wasn't much that I remember. There was one really stupid pamphlet that was put out. It had a pasted-up photograph on the front of it in which they had taken a picture of the governor

greeting a visitor in Sacramento, an Oriental visitor, and bowing to him. And then . . .

VASQUEZ: It was a little girl, originally?

BURBY: I'm not sure I ever saw the original. But, at any rate, the governor was in a bowing position. Then they had cut the picture there and put a picture of [Nikita] Krushchev on the other side of that. I never was aware that that had any effect. I mean, it was so absurd on the face of it. The governor had nothing to do with Krushchev. [Laughter] There was some of that. The John Birch Society was pretty active in those days. But that's a limited spectrum of politics. What appeals to them, other people either never notice or are turned off by, I've always thought.

VASQUEZ: Moreover, hadn't Governor Brown enjoyed a period in his first administration when some major projects had come through quite positively?

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Brown's Assets and Liabilities in 1962

BURBY: Well, as they say in the cliché, there are a number of things to which he could point with

pride. I mean, the water project had gone through. The master plan for education had been put in place. It hadn't been completed, but at least there was a design for getting ready for what the demographics made clear was going to happen, campuses with twenty-seven thousand students on them all over the state. That was his baby. The state was in good shape, financially.

There were some negatives. I mean, the Caryl Chessman case was still sort of in the background. There was that unfortunate crack which turned out to have been made by a staff member, actually, out of the Democratic convention in 1960. As I told you before, I wasn't there, but as I understand it, the governor got booed at his own convention, somewhat. That's where the "tower of jello" came from.

VASQUEZ: Before we move on, how do you assess the damage that the Chessman case caused the governor?

BURBY: I think it never went away completely. But, obviously, it didn't hurt him in '62. In '66, there were a lot of other things. There were the

campus riots. There was Proposition 14. Well, there were just a number of negatives there.

The Chessman Case

VASQUEZ: The Caryl Chessman case, is that a situation where what you were talking about earlier comes into play, that many times the governor was not enough of a politician when he needed to be?

BURBY: Yeah, in part. I mean, he believed--and still believes very strongly--that capital punishment is not just secularly pointless, but morally wrong. The state has no more right to kill anybody than an individual has.

VASQUEZ: And yet, you and Hale Champion had convinced him not to extend another reprieve. And, as the story goes, [Governor Edmund G.] Jerry Brown [Jr.] changed his mind. Is that right?

BURBY: I wasn't there. So, if you want a second-hand version. . . . Which I, personally, find fascinating because when I went to work for the staff, the Chessman case was still a great puzzle to me. As I understand what happened. That because of the law on a third felony, there was no commutation possible. That was derived from something that happened in Texas, as I understand

it. But the supreme court refused to give the governor the right to make a permanent decision in the Chessman case. Then he went to the legislature and they did the same thing to him. His only option then was a series of reprieves.

I don't know who on the staff argued in which direction. But it was pretty clear from a distance--I was back East at the time--that it looked bad. If you believed in capital punishment, it looked bad; and if you didn't believe in it, it looked even worse. The night that Chessman was scheduled to be executed, the 1960 Winter Olympics were on. Almost everybody on his staff was in Squaw Valley. His wife was in Squaw Valley. I think Cecil Poole, the clemency secretary, was in town. But the decision had been made that he would not intervene.

There was a state police guardhouse outside the governor's house. When the governor was in the mansion, the old mansion, all incoming telephone calls went into a bypass and the guard answered all the calls and then called the governor on a separate line and asked him if he

wanted to talk to whoever was calling. So at some time that night, the governor is sitting all alone in the mansion. There's a storm, as I recall. It couldn't be more dramatic, I suppose. Somebody at the Los Angeles Times, in the city room. . . . You know how old city rooms used to work? The city editor's desk always was in a place where he could see everybody. He stood up and he pointed at somebody, whose name I had never heard, and said, "Call Sacramento. Call the governor and see if there's any change in the Chessman thing." Well, for whatever reason, that call bypassed the guard and went directly through to the governor. And he had just hung up on Jerry who, I think, was at the seminary then. At any rate, for whatever reason, that call went straight through. And the governor told the reporter that, yes, he had decided to grant a reprieve to Chessman. Of course, once that happened, there was no turning back.

VASQUEZ: Without informing you or Hale Champion or anyone else?

BURBY: Well, there wasn't anybody there. Cecil Poole, I

think, was in a car on his way to the mansion when this happened. At any rate, that was that.

VASQUEZ: How did you . . .

BURBY: I was back at Harvard on a Nieman fellowship at that time.

Nixon-Brown Debates

VASQUEZ: Going back to the '62 campaign and the role of your office in things like speech writing and preparing the governor for a debate that he had. [There was] at least one debate with Nixon and, I think, your office was involved in preparing questions that were presented to the candidates at the time.

BURBY: Well, actually, there were two debates. I very nearly got fired because of one of them. They were really outraged with me, I didn't ask anybody about this. It was really, one of the dumbest things I've ever done in my life. Nixon was formidable, you know. He had been vice president. He had been in the United States Senate. There was some concern about just whether he could be beaten.

VASQUEZ: On issues, or on image?

BURBY: A combination. So a friend of mine who was

managing editor of the San Luis Obispo paper at the time--not a friend, but a guy I respected as a good functioning journalist and a decent man--called and said that the AP [Associated Press] managing editor's association was putting together a program and they would like to see whether they could get the governor and Richard Nixon to debate. I said I'd call him back. I forget whether I talked to anybody or not. But, anyway, I said, "Yeah. Go ahead and set it up."

Once it got locked in, the roof absolutely fell on me. I said we wanted to go first. And that stood up until the very last minute when Herb Klein, who was Nixon's press secretary, went in and said, no, Nixon wanted to go first, and he had been vice president, and so forth. This guy from San Luis Obispo, bless his heart, said, "Look, you agreed to it. We aren't going to change this at the last minute." Well, what this allowed was for the governor to say just whatever he wanted to. And he did. He answered questions and he talked about California.

You know, the press always had its reservations about Nixon that came across as

hostility, even back then. So, his part of the program, as I remember it, got into a kind of good guys-bad guys discussion about the press. So the governor came off quite well with that group. We walked out to the car, got in, and he reached over and he slapped me on the knee, and he said, "I'm going to beat that son of a bitch." Well, that made all the trouble I took from the campaign staff worth it. He never looked back after that.

[Interruption]

VASQUEZ: The second debate, you were saying?

BURBY: The second debate was in San Francisco at the Fairmont [Hotel], and that was a big deal. I think it was the Chamber of Commerce. You'll have to check that. But, at any rate, it was not an automatically friendly audience for the governor. It's kind of interesting. It, I think, got recorded in the history as a draw, which is probably what it should have been. It didn't make any difference to the campaign. But a number of the staff people--[Donald C.] Don Bradley who was running the campaign and, I'm pretty sure, Hale Champion and whoever else was

with him--stayed in the room, in the ballroom where the debate was. I figured I didn't care what it looked like from there. I cared what it looked like on television because that was what most people were going to see. There was hardly anybody in the ballroom compared to the population in the state. So I went up and watched it on television.

The people who came out of the ballroom had really crestfallen looks. They thought that the governor had been beat up. I came downstairs from this room where I had watched it on television, and I said, "At worst, it's a draw." They didn't understand what I was talking about. Well, it turned out that there was a lot of sort of muttering under the breath, hostile to the governor and friendly to Nixon. They heard all that in the ballroom. None of that came over on the television set. It all got filtered out. So, they were influenced by that. Very interesting thing.

VASQUEZ: The questions that were fed to Nixon, where were those prepared? I believe there were question-and-answer sessions that each of the candidates

did on television here in Los Angeles. Do you remember any of that?

BURBY: No, I don't. I know that there were questions. I assume that [Richard] Dick Tuck was involved in those. Tuck was the one who engineered that.

VASQUEZ: He pretty much handled that?

BURBY: That sign in Chinatown that said in script, "Tell us about the Hughes loan." But I was not directly involved in that. Again, you had to draw a line, really, during the campaign between a government press secretary and a political campaign. There were some lines that I didn't walk over, and I guess that would have been one of them.

VASQUEZ: Was there a tendency during campaigns for the campaign staff to have more influence over press releases and what-have-you than the ongoing press secretary?

BURBY: Well, they put out their own. They had their own press operation.

Press Secretary versus Campaign Secretary

VASQUEZ: But there must have been some coordination.

BURBY: There was. But they put out campaign stuff and we put out government stuff. Sometimes they

merged, sometimes you couldn't tell the difference between them, particularly when a government press release was about something that would make the campaign look better. The only thing I remember about questions was a terrible thing that happened in Santa Barbara when the governor was on television. The questions were coming in and they were written down on three-by-five cards and put in front of him. He'd read the question from the card and then he'd start to answer. Well, every once in a while, he'd glance down at this card. It was a national columnist-- I forget now which one it was--watching on television and he just assumed the governor was reading answers every time he looked at this card. He wrote that. Well, it was devastating.

There was another thing early in the campaign, again, that Hale engineered. There was a tendency nationally for the press to assume that Richard Nixon would clean the governor's clock in a campaign because they had seen him in Washington for years and years. And, as I say, the governor looked a little battered because of the Chessman thing, which was one of the things

that the national press was directly involved in. And then, the convention when John [F.] Kennedy was nominated.

They tended to look down their noses at the governor then. So we put together a trip to Washington that included a speech at the National Press Club, and included some private interviews with people of national reputation and a visit to the White House, early in 1962. I forget what month it was. The speech was a very good speech. That was a committee speech. I mean, everybody contributed to that and my guess is either Hale or Roy Ringer took over the last draft. That went over well.

The private conversations went over well. The visit to the White House was useful, partly because John Kennedy had a kind of genius on this sort of thing. He and the governor sat in front of the fire up on the second floor. Kennedy, either because of his reading of history or because of his incredible research staff, gave Pat a lecture about what had happened to people who had been prominent in national politics when they tried to go home again. Nobody had ever

made it. It was a very soft sell, he didn't say, [back-slapping sound] "You get out there Pat, we're fighting for you." No cheerleading, just this little history lecture, which I found absolutely fascinating.

At any rate, when we left Washington, the national press began to write stories saying, "Don't count Pat Brown out yet." And that was all we wanted. Then the California press began to say, "The national press is saying don't count Pat Brown out. They're probably right." Or words to that effect.

White House Involvement

VASQUEZ: One thing that I was interested in is how much help, if any, did you get from the White House? You had an immensely popular and photogenic president with some very astute media people around him. Were you able to draw on those resources?

BURBY: Well, John Kennedy came out towards the end of that campaign. . . . Again, you know, that's a long time ago and on details, especially the political details, my memory may not be terribly trustworthy. But my sense is that because we had

decided to run a California campaign, that was our strength, that we wanted a minimum of interference, if you will, or support, from Washington. We didn't want to divert attention from California. Which is not to say that there wasn't any at all. My guess would be--again, I can't remember it clearly--that Clair Engle in the U.S. Senate probably came out and said good things about the governor. Some of the committee chairmen came out. The Appropriations Committee chairman [Senator Carl Hayden] came out and campaigned for him. But, by and large, it was California-oriented and kept that way.

The 1966 Campaign: The Setting

VASQUEZ: Now, the 1966 campaign was different.

BURBY: Totally different.

VASQUEZ: Why was it different and how did you handle it differently?

BURBY: Well, it was different because it never quite got put together.

VASQUEZ: You had a different campaign manager now this time around.

BURBY: We had three campaign managers. We had two and then Fred Dutton came in and became a third.

VASQUEZ: Who were the other two?

BURBY: Don Bradley and Hale Champion. My recollection of that is that despite all the conversation among the staff about who would be the easier candidate--Ronald Reagan or some old California politician--that the governor sensed early on that that was not going to be, that he was going to lose. My best recollection of the campaign is most how little he let that show and how he just kept plugging away, even though the polls fairly early on made it clear that he was just not going to win.

VASQUEZ: What makes you think he sensed he was going to lose? Or did the staff all sense this?

BURBY: Staffs are more mercurial than politicians. I mean, on any given day a staff can persuade itself that things are going to be all right just as they go wrong. You know, on bad days they go much farther down than the politician does. Politicians tend to learn to even those highs and lows out, stop the highs and grab the lows before they get too low. But, as I said before, the governor had a lot of things that you simply could not cope with. There was no way you could

cope with the Berkeley riots, with the Santa Barbara fires, with . . .

VASQUEZ: Watts.

BURBY: Watts was devastating.

VASQUEZ: The UFW [United Farm Workers] cause?

BURBY: Pardon?

VASQUEZ: The UFW marching to Sacramento? Not being met by a liberal governor.

BURBY: That hurt the governor, especially with the CDC [California Democratic Council] and the liberal wing of the party, which had always been a little suspicious of him.

VASQUEZ: He also got [Samuel W.] Sam Yorty dividing forces, if I may put it that way.

BURBY: Yeah, in the other direction.

The Strategy

VASQUEZ: The strategy here was what? To run against Reagan? He seemed the most beatable? That's the conventional wisdom.

BURBY: That always seemed quite debatable to me and, I think, to a lot of the people on the staff. But it got away from them.

VASQUEZ: Why did it seem debatable to you at the time?

BURBY: Because I had seen him on television and I had

seen his 1964 speech on television. He's a very good actor and he was saying a lot of things that appealed to a lot of people because of the turmoil in the state. He was going to make things right.

VASQUEZ: By this time, did you have a more substantial electronic capability in the press office?

BURBY: By this time, we had more coverage. . . . CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] was up there. I'm pretty sure NBC [National Broadcasting Company] from Los Angeles and the San Francisco people were there every press conference, and sometimes in between, doing stories on their own. But Pat was not Ronald Reagan on television.

VASQUEZ: But he was an incumbent. And you, I think, had put together some films. Hadn't Charles Guggenheim put together some short films on particular issues?

BURBY: Oh, yeah . . .

VASQUEZ: Were those useful?

BURBY: You haven't talked to Charlie. Is he on your list?

VASQUEZ: No, not at this time he isn't. I've read an interview that was done with him, but it's very short.

BURBY: Charlie put together an absolutely beautiful "This is Pat Brown" half-hour film. At one point, on one of his tours--and I really am no longer sure even where it was--the governor. . . . Carlos, I've got to go to a meeting. Can we pick this up later?

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Session 3, September 22, 1987]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

The Problem of Image

VASQUEZ: When we spoke last, you were recounting the gubernatorial campaigns of 1962 and 1966. How were those two campaigns different?

BURBY: Well, as night and day. Let me tell you about the first trip I made to Sacramento after I came back to California in 1978. The last time I had been up there, people in government were getting up and going down to the office [in the morning] and trying to figure out what they could do to get something started--building and expanding and growing. I don't think I was fully aware of it at the time, but by 1978, the mood of the state had changed, the legislature and the people in the governor's office were getting up and going down to the office to see what they could keep from being torn apart. It was just the opposite side of a coin.

That, as I remember it, was the difference between the '62 and '66 campaigns. I don't think any of us after, oh, early spring, had any question that Pat Brown could beat Nixon. I don't

think any of us, especially after the primary--except in times when your heart sort of ran away with your head--thought that he could beat Ronald Reagan. Pat never mentioned that during the campaign. But I think he knew early on that it would take some kind of a miracle. I really was, in all the time I've known him, never prouder of him than that he never let on. [He] made all the speeches that he was asked to make. [He] went in to all the crowds and did all the things that a campaigner who thinks he's winning does. But it was a very tough campaign.

A lot of things happened between the Nixon campaign and the Reagan campaign. You had Watts. You had the Berkeley riots, [so] closely identified with Pat because he had done so much for the university, that when you mentioned his name, universities came to mind. The minute the trouble started there, he got stuck with it. He was the first California governor ever to call the Highway Patrol onto a state university campus. There's a funny story about that, too. Funny, not in a humorous sense. Have you heard the story?

VASQUEZ: No, no. Please.

BURBY: [Robert G.] Sproul's office? Well, Pat was down in Los Angeles and I was up in Sacramento, sort of with the watch. They called from Berkeley and said they wanted the Highway Patrol. There had been a last straw. What had happened was that Sproul's office had been broken into and ransacked, they said. So that pretty much did it. I called the governor and he said, "I guess we have to do it." So, the Highway Patrol went in. Some months later, Sproul, who had been abroad when all of this was going on, came back to the campus on a visit. He was emeritus by this time--and they said, "Come up here, we have something we want to show you." So they went up to his office, unlocked and opened the door and they said, "Look at that." And he looked around and he said, "Looks just the way I left it."

VASQUEZ: [Laughter]

BURBY: You know, I can understand that. I mean, he used the floor for a file. [Laughter] That was a sad business. And the Watts riot was a tough one. The mood was changing.

VASQUEZ: You said earlier that in the '62 campaign, everyone sort of did what they were supposed to

and it came out smooth.

BURBY: Right.

Internal Organizational Problems

VASQUEZ: What were some of the problems internal to the campaign in 1966? I understand there were conflicts, for example, with the team of Don Bradley and Fred Dutton that played into this.

BURBY: Well, it wasn't so much that there was conflict between Bradley and Dutton as that the people who have been through a lot of political campaigns could sense that there was something wrong with this one. Either the direction, or there was too much baggage to carry around from the almost eight years that Pat was governor. The accumulation of things like Watts, Berkeley, and the Rumford Fair Housing Act.

Well, you know how it is when you're in the middle of something, you always assume that somebody who's on the outside looking in has a better picture than you have. There was sort of that assumption that Fred Dutton might be able to get a handle on it. I think Fred thought that, too. But I don't remember a lot of the details. I do remember he wrote a memorandum. See, Fred

was Pat's earliest political advisor. His campaign in '58 was smooth and well executed, and Fred was in direct charge of that. Then Fred had left. In '62 he was still a guy that Pat would call to talk things over with.

So, in '66, I guess Pat also felt that if only Fred could come back, he might be able to pull this out. I don't think anybody could have done it. Certainly, when that happened, then friction did develop. Don Bradley was a pro and a proud guy. Fred Dutton had a big investment in politics and his own intellect, which is substantial. What happened was about what you'd expect. Don was put out; Fred couldn't grab ahold of the campaign machinery the way he had expected to because by that time it was Don's.

VASQUEZ: So he was brought in after the campaign had started?

BURBY: Oh, yeah. And it's a classic case. You cannot have more than one campaign manager making decisions. If for no other reason than the troops get divided on who they should be listening to, what they should be doing. That did not contribute directly to what happened, but it was

part of it. So, it was an irritant.

Damaging Issues

VASQUEZ: If you were to identify one issue, one event or series of events, between 1962 and '66, that most hurt Pat Brown's chances of winning his third term, what would that be?

BURBY: Oh, I guess it would be Berkeley, '64.

VASQUEZ: More than the Rumford Act?

BURBY: Well, you're asking me to rank those. I would certainly not put Rumford more than one percentage point below Berkeley. And maybe it belongs to be number one. It was very divisive.

I think I told you the last time we talked that we were young enough then that I went home the night the Rumford Act passed and said to my wife, "Do you realize that our kids may very well grow up in a culture that's really color blind?" Nothing could be further from the truth. For no particular good reason it panicked people of substance. They took that to the ballot the next year. And, of course, it was defeated.

VASQUEZ: But you were saying that you thought Berkeley was more important. Why? More important in what sense, more detrimental?

BURBY: Because there was violence involved over the period of time that led to cars being rocked onto their tops and fires set. There's one thing that very few people ever realize about that and about what happened at Berkeley. It was not the Mario Savio people who were responsible for that, but the Barry Goldwater people.

They made the request--the Goldwater people, the Young Americans for Freedom--to have a campus guest speaker that the university turned down. Then the Young Americans for Freedom and Mario Savio's people were both on the same side immediately. It was a kind of a critical mass. After that, there was no stopping them.

It happened that Vietnam was beginning to creep into people's consciousness. Lou Harris discovered some years later, when he looked back at it, the beginning of disillusionment with government was right about that time, I think, he did his study in '68. I forget how far back he went, but there's no question that it had set in then.

And then, of course, [there was] Watts. People in California, people on our block in

Sacramento, would say, "My god, look at how beautifully those people live down there." I mean, compared to the East Coast. "What's going on here?" And I would try to explain to them, the little I understood about it at the time, but there was just no listening. There was no common ground, there was no communication.

VASQUEZ: Do you think many people blamed Pat Brown for these things? After all, he had been such an advocate of a master plan for higher education. He had been an advocate for doing away with discrimination in housing, employment, and such.

BURBY: I think if they didn't blame him, they certainly identified him with it. I couldn't, for the life of me, tell you exactly how it was expressed in those days, but there was a sense among the white community that I knew in Sacramento and in Los Angeles of: "How much is enough? Will nothing satisfy the young people, the blacks? We have turned ourselves inside out for this." Unspoken, but that was sort of the sense you got. "And still, all of this happens."

Again, I suppose it is part of what Harris found, that it was going sour and nobody could

figure out why. And then, of course, as it turns out that's about the time it started to go sour, too. It's hard to be persuasive with people who had tough times during the fifties and the sixties, but those were two pretty good decades by and large. The work force was expanding all the time and most of the time there was an expectation that things would get better.

VI. ASSESSING THE BROWN ADMINISTRATION

"Responsible Liberalism"

VASQUEZ: Pat Brown's program was called, I think even his own people in his inaugural speech referred to it as "responsible liberalism." Which, as I interpret it, was an activist government, even an expanding state government. How would you characterize what you understood at the time, by responsible liberalism and this "souring" that you speak of.

BURBY: Responsible liberalism? That was already a result of a sense of some souring. Otherwise, you wouldn't need the word "responsible" in there. Everybody tries to do this, but it never works, the only people who usually understand what those

kinds of labels mean are the people who invent them. I mean, what is a "neoconservative"? As near as I can remember--and I must tell you, it didn't mean a lot to me, either--responsible liberalism meant that you were going to keep pressing forward, but not too fast.

VASQUEZ: So it was a defensive term, wasn't it?

BURBY: That's the way I remember it.

VASQUEZ: It's a defensive term but it was a very aggressive reform program that was being projected.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: There's reform projected for higher education, critical reforms in the areas of water, wanting to reform state government, wanting to reform teacher credentialing.

BURBY: Now, wait a minute. I thought "responsible liberalism" came after he had been elected.

VASQUEZ: It was after he was elected, but as he was espousing the program that he was going to implement that the term begins to be used. That's why I find it interesting that it is worded defensively.

BURBY: Well, of course, you know, it's funny you should fasten on that. I missed a couple of years of

this. So I am not sure when that got into the lexicon.

Brown: "Gut" Politician

VASQUEZ: Maybe the question that I'm trying to get at is whether or not there was a concept of a program that the administration was wedded to and tried to bring to fruition, or whether it was so much campaign and early administrative rhetoric?

BURBY: No, Pat Brown was not a rhetorical politician. He was a gut politician. The things that really were important to him were growth and an even crack at whatever was to be had by hard work. He also believed in hard work. An equal chance for people. I don't think any of us--and I include myself in this--really understood the problems. We could read about them and intellectualize them, but really [did not] understand what it was like to be a black person in California in those days. That came much later. The learning process, for me, started with Watts. But intellectually, and as a sort of matter of fairness, Pat was strongly committed to that.

He was living out and working on the American ethic the way it had been modified by the

Dépression. There were a lot of people, incredible numbers of people during the Depression, who thought it was their fault. [They thought] they hadn't worked hard enough. And it was the work-hard-and-you-can-get-ahead and everybody's-included-in-that-no-matter-who-you-are, that he believed in. His university programs, his highway program, the water program, were all part of that [as well as] the Rumford Fair Housing Act. It was all one ball of wax. Now, that's responsible, and it's liberal. But I don't know why it was called responsible liberalism. [Laughter]

Northern California-Oriented Campaign Staffs

VASQUEZ: Some analysts argue that Pat Brown knew northern California better than he knew southern California, and people around him as well. Do you think that might have been part of the reason that he got caught flat-footed with Watts? A lot of people did, not only the governor, but it would seem to me that the governor's office should not have been so surprised.

BURBY: Well, it's certainly true that his staff was northern [California]-oriented. Fred Dutton was

from Redwood City and Hale had never lived south of Van Ness Avenue [in San Francisco]. Don Bradley was a northerner. They knew the south, but they knew it, especially Bradley, politically. Fred worked down here for Southern California Edison for a while, but Fred's life was a political life, the Young Democrats, this sort of thing. I think that's probably fair.

It's kind of funny that you should bring that up. In '63, the aerospace business was not doing so well. There were, for reasons that I'm not clear on, fairly major cutbacks in defense contracts out here and a lot of them [aerospace firms] got caught with these big staffs of people with very special talents, system engineers and the like. So Pat [commissioned] four contracts to see whether there was anything systems engineers could do in a social sense other than build space craft. One of those reports consisted of [a] very simple accumulation of secondary material on crime, unemployment, wages, and so forth. Lo and behold, on one page, all of these little pink outlines showed up bright red at Watts. Nobody had even noticed before.

Blacks and the Brown Administration

VASQUEZ: Was there anyone in the administration when you were there that was an expert or was familiar with the black community? You had Cecil Poole.

BURBY: Cecil Poole went to Yale [University]. [Laughter] I'm not knocking Yale and I'm not knocking Cecil, but Cecil's job was not a "black" job and it was not a job to represent black concerns. He was the clemency secretary.

VASQUEZ: Right.

BURBY: Cecil was the only black on the staff at the time of Watts. As a matter of fact, I think he had even left by then. He had left a couple of years earlier, went down to San Francisco to be U.S. Attorney.

VASQUEZ: So there really was no one on the administration's staff that could inform the governor about the status of blacks?

BURBY: Well, Lou Haas came as close as anybody. Lou was an old-fashioned, gut liberal. Lou tried. But Lou's interest was more in the farm workers than in the black community. Because he knew the farmworkers. I don't think even Lou knew the black community well. There were some people with

very strong social consciences, but you have to remember that the early 1960s were a lot different. This is twenty-five years after that. There have been a lot of changes in what seems important to people and what politicians pay attention to. In California, particularly, blacks weren't pressing as hard then as they are now. Watts started the press, as least as I remember it.

VASQUEZ: Do you think events in other parts of the country among blacks affected what happened in Watts?

BURBY: No. I think Watts was . . .

VASQUEZ: Sui generis?

BURBY: Sui generis, sure. There was something quite similar to Watts in Harlem, during World War II. It was kept out of all the newspapers because there was a war on. But Watts wasn't the first explosion of its kind. When Pat first went down to Watts, when he got back here from Europe, we drove down and drove around. It was pretty quiet at that time. He looked around and he said, "My god, this looks like a prison riot!" And, of course, it was. They burned their own bunks. Pat learned fast, after that. But, of course, it was too late.

Why Brown Alienated Both Sides on Some Issues

VASQUEZ: Tell me something, in the Berkeley case, in the Watts case, in the Chessman case, to a certain degree in the UFW case, Brown ended up coming out in the negative with both sides in those conflicts. In the case of Watts, with both blacks and whites; with law enforcement and community leaders. In Chessman, he came out badly both with those who were for and against capital punishment, etc. Why?

BURBY: In the newspaper business, when nobody likes a story, you say, "Well, I must have gotten it right." [Laughter] You can't do that with Pat. I don't know. That's a very good question. Let me come back to it. I want to think about that.

VASQUEZ: Let's get back to that when we do some kind of evaluation. I think it gets at more than just the man, it has to reflect somehow on people around him, it seems to me. In '58, of course, the Democrats had been able to exploit the divisions among the Republicans.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: In '62, it was a case of who came together and unified sooner. In '66, you had [Samuel W.] Sam

Yorty running in the primary, a rather nasty primary as primaries go in California. And you had a very popular figure--and a powerful figure--Jesse Unruh, sort of dropping his arms to his sides.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

The California Democratic Council

VASQUEZ: And you had the CDC [California Democratic Council], the previously vigorous, young social-activist types, almost doing the same thing.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: Can you put those three factors together in a context of how much this may have hurt not only the '66 campaign for the Democrats, but Democratic fortunes for the next decade as well?

BURBY: Well, they were very important. I think in politics there are two things you try to avoid. One is surprising people, and the other is having people look at your party and say--even if they don't understand why--it is in turmoil. The fact is that the Democratic party is in turmoil often enough.

Clearly that happened in '66. Sam Yorty was not one of my favorite people and had I not been

involved, it wouldn't have bothered me a bit that he thought he would be a better governor than Pat Brown because I would have expected that from [Laughter] Sam Yorty. It would have made me think better of Pat Brown, probably. But to the average voter who doesn't follow politics very closely, that made the party look a mess, no question about that.

VASQUEZ: You even had intraparty fights over fund-raising, [Congressman] George [E.] Brown [Jr.], from Riverside, questioning where the money from gala balls, and this sort of thing, was going.

BURBY: Right. And then the CDC was another case. They recreated the Democratic party in California, but they did so on an entirely different base from the one that the party should have been dependent on in 1966. Theirs was an Adlai Stevenson party and Adlai Stevenson was an intellectual. Intellectuals are always interested in the big problems, like nuclear war. Little problems, like hungry black people, that's for social workers. That's terrible, to knock on the CDC, but the fact is that they were an intellectual crusading group. And, you know, more power to them. When they were

putting that Stevenson party together, it was, I guess, almost the first Democratic party that had ever existed in the state of California. There was one Democratic governor by accident.

They also had a very rigid matrix that they put candidates through. And Pat didn't fit every place. As I recall, he had not, in 1966, said he thought the Vietnam War was a terrible thing. Partly, I'm sure, out of loyalty to the president who needed all the help he could get then, and was going to need more later. Vietnam was a big issue for CDC.

VASQUEZ: But not for Brown?

BURBY: Not yet.

Jesse Unruh and the Brown Administration

VASQUEZ: I find it interesting that the Democrats at that period had a strong matrix, potential matrix of players, among them, the CDC which, maybe more than the orthodox Democratic party groups, had a nice network throughout the state. You had a governor who had done a lot by then. He had his problems, but a lot had been done. And you had a rising force in Jesse Unruh. Yet, the three elements couldn't be harnessed for one goal, it

seems. Did anyone try? Did Hale Champion try?

BURBY: No, I think by that time, Hale understood that while he might be able to harness the CDC and Pat Brown, he never was going to be able to harness Jesse Unruh. The truth of what happened there I have no idea. I wasn't involved in whatever discussions there were. But Jesse felt very strongly that Pat had told him he would have a shot at it [the governorship] in '66. Pat feels just as strongly that he didn't.

Let me give you part of the answer to the question you asked earlier about why, out of big things, Pat often came out with both sides mad at him. I think I told you before I never regarded Pat Brown as a particularly good politician. His instinct was to help everybody who asked him to help. That sometimes left him at the door shaking hands with people as they left, with them thinking he had agreed to do what they had come to ask him to do when, in fact, he was just being friendly. That's a minor part of the answer, but I think that's part of it.

Brown's Media and Public Image

VASQUEZ: That's been commented on before. Some, however,

interpret it as an inability to come to a decision.

BURBY: The "tower of Jello."

VASQUEZ: That kind of an argument. Or, the other, that he took the position of the person whom he last spoke to. Others argue that he would ask innumerable people about their opinion on any important decision he had to make.

BURBY: Well, that doesn't bother me. I wish more politicians did that. It's the judgment that comes out of all those questions that counts. I think Pat probably did not make clear when he smiled at people and said, "That's very interesting" that he was taking it under advisement, not agreeing. But that wasn't his nature. He is a very friendly man and he hates like hell to hurt people or to make them feel bad. But I think when we first started out on this, I said he was one of the best managers I ever saw in my life. I mean, he was all over the government, all the time.

VII. REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESS AND CALIFORNIA POLITICS

Image and Substance in Public Life

VASQUEZ: I'm wondering, are we talking about a period in

which public life, a successful public life, gets determined by the image that is made about the players more than about the accomplishments?

BURBY: Sure. Probably nowadays.

VASQUEZ: Do you see the period in which you were serving as maybe a transition?

BURBY: Probably. Television was coming along as a major influence. I think I've said before that my impression is that compared to a lot of other states, very few Californians pay a lot of attention to state politics. I mean, they'll vote for governor, but not in very huge numbers even then, or huge percentages. It's [Sacramento] certainly remote from southern California and it's even remote, somehow or another, from San Francisco, for being only eighty or ninety miles away. So that what actually goes on in Sacramento, or went on in those days, was sort of outside the vision of most Californians. All they had to go on was impressions because there wasn't much coverage of Sacramento in those days, even in the press as I remember it. Even less on television, at least up until '64, '65. There wasn't much you could do to get their attention,

either. I don't think that has changed.

VASQUEZ: It's still hard to get their attention, do you think?

BURBY: Sure. Oh, absolutely. Probably even harder nowadays.

VASQUEZ: You don't think that incumbents have been institutionalized into television? The president can get on national television pretty much any time he wants. Our governor still has trouble taking over the airwaves . . .

Oligarchic Power in California Politics

BURBY: Well, those are different levels. I mean, the president is different from the governor. The president is more important to most Californians than their own governor. I mean in terms of visibility. Nowadays with the [Paul] Gann spending limit, you could put this whole state on automatic pilot and save a lot of money on the governor's salary. There is not much that anybody can do to nudge the state in one direction or another nowadays. And to some extent, that was true in Pat's day.

Los Angeles has a life of its own and San Francisco a life of its own. Look at the beer and

wine and cigarette taxes in California. Those are all determined by the people who sell beer and the people who bottle wine and the people who make cigarettes. Not by the people. [Laughter] So, it's already somewhat on automatic pilot. I've got to come to grips with this in an editorial one of these days. There is a kind of oligarchy running this state on a one-third majority.

VASQUEZ: How does that reflect itself in something that you've obviously always had a lot of interest in, transportation?

BURBY: We're going to sell bond issues to build highways. That's ridiculous. The gas tax is about one-fourth of what it should be to have the same purchasing power you had twenty-five years ago. You know, I think transportation is a lot less important than health care. You can't find a nickel for health care. You can't finance a decent prenatal health program in this state. Trauma centers are closing up.

I suppose that the state, in one sense, is its own worst enemy because it is so diverse ethnically, geographically. You've driven around the state: in snow for breakfast, you can be in

the desert by lunchtime, you can be on an ocean for dinner. There are so many places in California. You run up the Mendocino coast and you're in Scotland. Well, there's very little in the way of a unifying force that I know--except maybe an invasion by Arizona--that would put all of those people on the same side of some issue, or at least more than half of them. Or attract their attention even. There's so many things going on in this state. It's not like Minnesota, not like Wisconsin. It's not like Massachusetts, even. Although even Massachusetts has an east that's distinct from its west. This isn't Beirut, exactly, but there is no unifying force.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

The "Secession" of Northern California

BURBY: When I lived in San Francisco in the late 1950s, they were serious about seceding.

VASQUEZ: This is where they were talking of dividing the state between north and south?

BURBY: Yeah. I think a lot of that has died out now. But people talked seriously about it.

VASQUEZ: What was it that motivated that movement? Because

it did have some following.

BURBY: Oh, I expect it was mostly the San Francisco Chronicle, which was kind of an irresponsible newspaper then, and has been going downhill [Laughter] since. But if you look at the eastern seaboard, with California laid alongside the Atlantic coastline, there are nine different states in that stretch of coastline. Eighteen senators. And in many ways, there is no more cohesion between, say, the San Fernando Valley--well, I don't want to say that; say Pasadena and Fort Bragg, California--than there is between South Carolina and Massachusetts. I mean, they have nothing in common.

California Politics: Diversity and Disunity

VASQUEZ: Yet this diversity is becoming more pronounced.

BURBY: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: What do you think that bodes for California politics?

BURBY: That's very hard to say. I don't know. And it's very bothersome.

VASQUEZ: But we've had twenty-five years to observe that diversity grow and we've had twenty-five years to observe politics.

BURBY: The politics is as fragmented as the society now. I don't know what it will take. I worry about the state and I know what ought to be done, I think. I have as good an idea as anybody. But I don't see either of the parties pulling themselves together in a way to try and put together some consensus on those things. You have not only one-man, one-vote, but one-man, one-issue and every man and every issue for himself. And woman, slash, slash, herself.

You can say, "Well, what we need is another John Kennedy." You know, somebody with that kind of style and substance. Or a Hiram Johnson, who will clear out all the lobbyists. But that's not the answer and I don't know what the answer is. Maybe desperation. I mean, maybe cohesion only comes with desperation. And when the universities all close and more than 51 percent of the people in the state are mentally ill, then maybe you'll get some action. It may take that. I don't know.

VASQUEZ: A crisis mentality?

BURBY: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: In effect, wasn't that what brought the blacks to the attention of the Brown administration after a

while? A crisis mentality?

BURBY: I hate to talk that way, because I used to hate to listen to older people say things like that when I was young. I used to think, "My god, we can do it." The older I get, the easier it is for me to understand how Adlai Stevenson died feeling so desperate after all the years of hope that he preached.

More on Liberals and Conservatives

VASQUEZ: Is that the inevitable future of a liberal?

BURBY: Oh, I don't think it has anything to do with liberalism. Being liberal is still, as far as I'm concerned, the only conscious state of the human mind. [Laughter]

VASQUEZ: The first time we talked . . .

BURBY: Now see, I identify liberals maybe differently from you. Liberals, to me, are people who don't know all the answers and are still asking. And conservatives are people who know all the answers and don't need to hear anymore.

VASQUEZ: I remember you mentioned that before.

BURBY: All right. There I am repeating myself in this short [Laughter] period of time.

VASQUEZ: I would like for you to expand on that a little

bit, though.

BURBY: Well, I don't know that I can. When you ask what the future for California is, the only way you can find out is to keep asking questions, not to assume, as so many conservatives do, that the answer is in "keep selling as many guns as people are willing to buy," and not interfering in any way in the way businesses want to conduct themselves and making people work to get on welfare. That's not purely conservative.

VASQUEZ: I wonder if conservatives are comfortable and identify with those who are comfortable, and liberals are those who maybe are comfortable but identify with those who are not.

BURBY: Well, that's the guilt approach to liberalism.
[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Well, it can be guilt or it can also be a real empathy and a real identification, a real commitment to social change.

BURBY: It gets so complicated these days. I think of conservatives as Edmund Burke conservatives, not the kind of crazy people you have off on the right these days. People who accept the fact that change has to come, and spend their time just

trying to make sure it occurs in the right direction and with as little disruption of their society as possible. That's absolutely acceptable to me, except I would like to see change come a little faster.

What we're talking about right now is change out of anybody's control, it seems to me. I don't see how that can be good in the long run. It may be. It may be that you throw up a handful of stuff and it will all land right-side up. I don't know.

Accomplishments of the Brown Administration

VASQUEZ: Well, the Brown administration was an administration that came to office with a vision, with a program--whether it was articulated as "responsible liberalism" or otherwise--it had a lot of reform in mind. You were close to a lot of the decisions that were made, if not involved in them. You've had a quarter century to think about what you were able to do and what you were not able to do. What do you think were the principal accomplishments and the principal failures of the Brown administration?

BURBY: Well, the accomplishments are pretty easy. The

education system is in better shape than it was. I think that the tax structure when he [Brown] left office was better than it was when he came in. The water program, of course, the highway program. But these are all concrete things--no pun intended--it was a lot easier to get a consensus, because everybody wanted another highway. In southern California, everybody seemed to understand that there was a need for more water, although they have yet to deliver [Laughter] very much of that. And everybody down here seems to be getting along pretty well so far. The universities fit with the notion that it would be nice to send children to a very good school without it costing you an arm and a leg.

It was on some of the human things that were not implied in Pat's first or even second contract with the people in the state--the Rumford Act, capital punishment being another (although, I guess, that had been settled and settled badly before the second term)--that ran against the grain in California. There is a strong thread of self-interest, at least in the middle class and the upper middle class in California, that

sometimes I think gets misidentified as liberalism. Universities are, per se, good things because they're liberal things to have around. But they also represent very strong self-interest on the part of middle-class and upper middle-class voters. So as long as Pat was going in a direction that stayed with that thrust, he was in good shape. But he departed from it, like having black people in the neighborhood.

VASQUEZ: And having universities where speech would be unfettered?

BURBY: And where a Marxist professor would be invited to come teach. That was not part of the contract.

VASQUEZ: You think Pat went too fast, too far, for the California electorate?

BURBY: I personally do. But I wouldn't have had him do it any other way. It had to be tried. It couldn't be put off. It had already been put off a long time. When I say, "I personally do," I was afraid while it was happening that the reaction would be exactly as it turned out to be. But I couldn't see any way to stop it, either the reaction or the action.

VASQUEZ: Did other people around the governor feel the same

way? People like Hale Champion, for example, who seems to have had a lot of influence?

BURBY: I don't think so. I think Hale, for all of his very skeptical attitude about a lot of things, was less worried about the reaction than he was about getting on with it. I think that was a pretty deep belief with Hale, and with the governor. But, you see, what I was there for was to worry about what was going to happen if you yelled fire in the crowded theater. So that's what I worried about.

Impact on California Politics

VASQUEZ: What impact do you think the Brown administration had, in the long view, on California politics?

BURBY: In the long view, it probably was pretty disruptive. Because it [Laughter] made it clear that you didn't need the establishment with you to get elected governor, that you could do it pretty much on your own. Which he did, you know. He was not the Democratic party's first choice, whatever the Democratic party is, or was then. I think Brown's chief value--and it's interesting to me how many people still, after all these years, still remember Pat and what he did--is as a model

for some politician, sometime in the future. One who will say the way [Senator Joseph] Joe Biden is now saying about [Laughter] Harry Truman, "I'm really Harry Truman, and he was a good president." [Someone who will] come on and say, "Well, all right. We've got some problems here, let's be honest and candid about them and let's sort them out and let's figure out what we do about them."

Impact on National Politics

VASQUEZ: During his administration a lot of things brought California to national attention. How did the Brown administration affect California's political image nationwide?

BURBY: Well, I suppose Pat, towards the end of his administration, was thought of more fondly in other places than he was here. But that's partly because, in a sense, he was in a kind of eastern mode. He was a doer; he wasn't a ballet dancer. He went out and got work done. People back East could understand that because so few of them had that kind of a governor at the time. [Laughter] Although, there have been some real surprises in governorships in the East these days, too.

A Zero-Sum Mentality in California Politics

VASQUEZ: Why couldn't Californians see that and appreciate that?

BURBY: Again, because of the diversity. I suppose there must be in California--a sense that it's all a zero-sum game. If somebody else gets something, you're going to lose. And that has to be recent because when we first moved to California in the mid-fifties, I didn't sense that at all.

VASQUEZ: There was enough for everybody?

BURBY: There was enough to go around, and it kept growing. I suppose that 1963 cutback in aerospace out here may have been the beginning of a sense that it wasn't going to last forever. At least the aerospace people understood that. Of course, now, that must look like a kind of silly conclusion to have reached because they're back on the treadmill again. But I think that must be part of the problem in California.

It must be part of what keeps the polity in this state from coalescing around some important things. And I just find it very hard to understand that a state would allow a governor [George Deukmejian] to give away a billion dollars when

the school system needs seven hundred million of it and the law says he doesn't have to give it away. Now that's different from Pat's day. I cannot conceive that he would have done anything like that.

VASQUEZ: Do you think the public response would have been the same then as it has been now with the Governor Deukmejian rebate?

BURBY: Mervyn Field got about 60 percent in favor of giving it to the schools in his poll. I think it would have been 90 percent in Pat's day.

VASQUEZ: What changed? The population is more diverse. Is the zero-sum mentality even more marked?

BURBY: With education, I sometimes wonder whether what changed was the same thing that killed labor unions. Things were so good, you didn't need a labor union. And I wonder whether, I would have no idea how you would get peeled down to the core on this, but whether education became less important. And I wonder about it, in part, because now it's becoming more important, because people are more concerned about whether they can find jobs. And that's kind of ridiculous, too, because it's becoming more important just about

the time it really might become less important, because there are so few young people, [Laughter] that anybody could get hired.

Brown Administration's Relations with the
Legislature

VASQUEZ: As administrations go in a state like California, how would you grade the Brown administration in its ability to work with the legislature?

BURBY: Well, I only have three [administrations] to go by. And he worked with his legislature better, certainly, than Reagan did, or than Jerry [Edmund G. Brown, Jr.]. And, of course, Deukmejian doesn't have to work with his because he's got everything on a two-thirds vote basis up there now and he can shut down anything he wants to with twelve Republicans.

VASQUEZ: Brown had a nice control of both houses that had been built-in over a number of years in the fifties.

BURBY: Right. And he understood them. There were some very good people up there then. This is another way in which I sometimes wonder whether I am beginning to show my age mentally. I think, it was a better and more thoughtful legislature than

what you have now. I mean, I have not seen the like of [Jerome R.] Jerry Waldie or [Philip A.] Phil Burton or [Joseph A.] Joe Rattigan in the senate, Virgil O'Sullivan. Hugh Burns, for all his faults. You could sit Hugh down and say, "Look, this is important." And he would say, "Why didn't you tell me?" They were different people. There was more independence. There was less a sense that they were working for a living and, therefore, couldn't afford to get their boss, which is their district, angry at them.

VASQUEZ: Their district? Or powerful interests in their district?

BURBY: Or some of each.

VASQUEZ: I ask that because I find it really interesting that . . .

BURBY: There are big traps down the road where I'm going and I haven't thought my way through those traps yet. It was an all-white legislature, by and large, which made it different. Not for its time. But they did some things that were not in their interest. There was a political scientist named David Truman. Have you ever come across that name?

VASQUEZ: Yes.

BURBY: Who, long before you could get any help out of a computer, worked out an elaborate scaling technique for determining from a congressman's district and his college and his ethnic background and his church, and so forth, a matrix for deciding how he would vote on a given issue. He found a 10 percent blank in there that couldn't be accounted for any other way except national interest or lack of self-interest or putting an issue above one's own interest. Very interesting.

VASQUEZ: Big picture issues.

BURBY: Yeah. But it seems to me that in those days I was more often surprised that the legislature did things than I am now. I'm hardly ever surprised now.

VASQUEZ: You mean negative things?

BURBY: Positive things. I was surprised they did positive things.

VASQUEZ: Is that right?

BURBY: There isn't one, but as close as you can get to a scientific formula for saying, "All right, this man's going to vote 'yes' on this," and he suddenly votes 'no' when the 'no' vote is the good

vote. It seemed to me there was more of that then than there is now.

Journalists and Lawyers in the Brown Administration

VASQUEZ: One of the interesting elements of the Brown administration, the people close to the governor, were the number of journalists there. You had a couple of academics but you had professional politician types and a large number of journalists. How did that mix work?

BURBY: You mean on the staff?

VASQUEZ: On the staff, yes.

BURBY: It worked fine and I never thought of it as a mix, actually. [Laughter] There were only a couple of us there. I mean, Hale was a journalist, and I was, and Lou Haas was. Everybody else was a lawyer.

VASQUEZ: Roy Ringer was a lawyer?

BURBY: But Roy worked down here in Los Angeles most of the time. He'd come up during the sessions. But Roy also lived in Los Angeles when. Being a journalist did not necessarily keep you out of politics. Back in the old days of the L.A. Times, you'd go on leave to run campaigns that were close

to the heart of the Times. The city hall reporter of the Times had his desk in the mayor's office. The political editor was chairman of the Republican Central Committee for the county. So politics was not very strange to southern California newspaper people.

VASQUEZ: How did those news people manage to keep from getting tainted the way, say, you did when you went from the press to politics and then started to go back to journalism? Was it that they were in a city where the L.A. Times was so powerful?

BURBY: Well, I'm not sure you can categorize too precisely. Roy is a very talented writer. And prodigious.

[Interruption]

Insurance and Transportation in California
Politics

BURBY: I think the insurance companies have come close to creating a revolution.

VASQUEZ: In what sense?

BURBY: In the sense that if they don't stop red-lining, if they don't stop carving up the state into pieces so that you can live in one place and pay an arm and a leg for insurance, and in another

place you get it practically free. If they don't stop nibbling away at the right of people when they have really been done badly to go to court and get a settlement that's appropriate to what happened to them, then people are going to go to the ballot and do all kinds of things that the insurance companies would rather not have. Now, that sort of thing you can attract people's attention with. But, again, it's a self-interest, me-mine kind of interest that you would attract.

VASQUEZ: Do you think the insurance question, the transportation crisis--and it is a crisis, at least in southern California--might be the makings of something that a politician along the lines of a Pat Brown might come along soon and make into a successful campaign?

BURBY: I don't know that Pat's model would fit that. I think what you're talking about is a kind of populism. I don't think Pat thought like a populist. He recognized that there is an establishment and that you've got to have business people with you on some issues or nothing will happen to the issue. Whereas an honest-to-god populist doesn't think that way. But, yeah,

maybe. Maybe some coalition like that.

You have pretty much reached the point now where you have run out of places to put freeways, even if you could pay for them. What's going to have to happen in California now is an adjustment in land use so that you'll eliminate the need for transportation. That's going to be tough. I think of myself as a free thinker, but to move me out of this house and down within walking distance of the L.A. Times? Very hard for me to accept. But it would make sense. It would help clear the Pasadena freeway. That's how tough it's going to be.

VASQUEZ: Do you think we'll ever have rapid transit on the order of some of the eastern cities?

BURBY: No.

VASQUEZ: Why?

BURBY: Maybe on the order; not the same kind. We're committed to above ground here now. I hope that they will finish at least the eighteen-mile stretch of the subway. That's the only hope that you can keep downtown Los Angeles from just freezing up. The rest of it will have to be done with light rail on freeway right-of-ways. You'll

never get rid of automobiles. They're too easy compared to everything else, except when you go downtown, for example. If they ever build the subway, the subway then would be easier.

But you look at Washington, D.C., which has probably the most beautiful subway system in the world, now. They've been working at it for a long time, but it's pretty much in place. There are more automobiles on the streets than there were before they started the subway system. But there are also more people in downtown Washington every day than there ever were. So you're getting an increase in automobile traffic, but the only way you can get them all in there in the morning and out at night is to have the subway, too. I think that's the way that Los Angeles has to think.

Special Interests in California Politics

VASQUEZ: Do you think that special lobbying interests have gotten stronger in the state and more influential in state politics, especially at the governor's level, in the twenty years since Pat Brown?

BURBY: That's my impression. I don't spend enough time in Sacramento to be sure. You have to remember, this was not long after they rode [Arthur H.]

Artie Samish out of town on a rail, so that that had a sort of depressing effect on that industry. But I think there were more lobbyists who got along more as purveyors of information than their role seems to be today.

For one thing, campaign contributions were not nearly as important in those days, especially to assemblymen and, in most cases, to senators. They were important to the governor because that was already a kind of an expensive political business. So if they were beholden at all, as a result of contributions, they were usually beholden to one entity. They would have been beholden to him anyway because it usually was the big industry or the big operation in their home district.

VASQUEZ: Does this in part explain why some liberal Democrats who are very much against nuclear war and even the nuclear industries, you find them equivocating on certain votes when in their districts are Teledyne and some of the other defense industries out in Redondo Beach and that area, the West Los Angeles area.

BURBY: Can you think of another way to explain [Laughter] it?

Public Campaign Financing

VASQUEZ: It never gets talked about. That's why I ask.

BURBY: It very seldom gets talked about. I used to resist that sort of thing up to a few years ago, partly because of my experience in Sacramento. It never seemed to me that you could make a direct connection between a campaign contribution and a vote. It always seemed a little unfair to me that Common Cause was trying to do that, that it was just saying, "Nothing else matters, it's the money that is all important." And in enough cases it's not, to make you question it. But I think even that has changed just in the last five years. I think Jesse Unruh came around to public financing as the only way out.

VASQUEZ: And he was the master of doing it the old-fashioned way, wasn't he?

BURBY: Well, he learned off Lyndon Johnson, but he did the same thing Johnson did. Of course, Johnson did it with one contributor, Brown & Root. They just filled him up with money and he went around and handed it out to the people in the House.

That is the technique that Jesse used, but with more contributors. Now, I'm not going to accuse Jesse of plagiarism, because I don't know that he ever knew that Lyndon Johnson did that. But it's the same technique. And even Jesse, who counted on that kind of a pattern of redistributing the wealth among his people, came around some years ago to public financing. It's the only way to break it up.

VASQUEZ: It doesn't seem to have taken on the current assembly speaker [Willie L. Brown, Jr.].

BURBY: No, because he's doing the same thing that Jesse did. But Jesse was retired and the current speaker is not. And where you sit--right?--is where you stand.

VASQUEZ: So you think Brown is more reflective of the current state of affairs and probably the immediate future than what Jesse was proposing?

BURBY: Well, Jesse was out of it by the time he came around to public financing. He didn't need it anymore to keep his job or to keep his troops in line. The speaker does. But I think Jesse probably is right. Then you come again to the question of whether you can get people to agree to

that. If they think politics is as warped as they say it is, are they going to give tax money to help you stay in office? I don't know.

VIII. REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESS AND NATIONAL POLITICS

A Good Press Secretary

VASQUEZ: You've been a press secretary and you've had time to think about what you did right, what you did wrong, within the constraints of what you were allowed to do in the administration. In this last part [of the interview] when we're asking you to evaluate the Brown administration and what it accomplished, who, in your mind, is a good example of what a press secretary should be at the state level, or at the national level?

BURBY: I think Marlin Fitzwater is doing an incredible job for Ronald Reagan because he isn't putting bandages on the information as it goes by. [Laughter] He's a conduit. He seems not to be at cross purposes with the press the way Larry Speakes was during most of the time he was there. I'm having a little trouble thinking about this because I, these days, spend so little time with press secretaries.

VASQUEZ: Maybe what's behind the question is to get you to assess the qualities of a good press secretary today, given your very definite ideas about how information is transmitted to the public. I think you've mentioned before the necessity not to doctor information, because it will eventually get out and be your own worst enemy.

BURBY: Well, you've pretty much said it all. I think a press secretary's job in many ways is usually way overrated. Part of it is being a lightning rod. When something goes wrong, they put you out in the rain [Laughter] and let the press beat on you. [Laughter] That's the least important part of it. Part of it is making sure that everybody in the government understands that the press isn't picking on them when it criticizes something and that sometimes the criticisms can be useful [by letting the people inside see how they look outside].

Sometimes even good and competent people screw things up. And when the press catches it, I've always thought it was kind of healthy. If they have, indeed, screwed up. Some of it is routine and yet is absolutely essential--making

sure that press releases get out on judicial appointments and that sort of thing. Some of it is acting as an interpreter for the press, for the governor. And to a lesser extent, vice versa. None of it should be con, although more and more these days it does seem to be. I am amazed at the success that they have at the White House of making it appear as though the president doesn't make mistakes.

The Press and the Reagan Administration

VASQUEZ: Is that the success of the White House or is it the success that comes from having a lot of journalists not wanting to be critical of this administration? Is that an unfair characterization?

BURBY: No. I think you've been through something that a lot of people didn't notice. In the first place, the president, to an extent on orders of magnitude greater than the governor, has control. I mean, this man hasn't had a press conference in five months. [Laughter] If the governor had tried that, about two weeks would have gone by and they would have been in his office. They wouldn't even have stopped at the press secretary's office.

Well, they can't do that in the White House. He has absolute control.

The press wrote its heart out early in the Reagan administration. It went on for more than a year. Press conference after press conference, the president said, "This is the way things are." The press quoted the Encyclopaedia Britannica saying the absolute opposite is true, and it rolled right off of everybody's back. Nobody cared what the truth was. His polls kept going up. And the press decided that keeping score on his mistakes was a waste of time. So they stopped trying to cover the mistakes in press conferences and went off and started trying to cover what was really happening in the government. The coverage of the Pentagon now needs a lot of improvement, but it's much better than it was ten years ago, much more thorough. They're probably still not doing a very good job on transportation.

VASQUEZ: How about international affairs?

BURBY: It's selectively damned good. I think our foreign correspondents are very good. They do a lot of interpretation, which is absolutely essential.

The State Department is another place that gets covered to the extent that the State Department wants to be covered. I mean, you've seen [Charles] Redman and Phyllis Oakley. They read their announcements; they take questions, and they don't answer the ones they don't want to.

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

Government and the Press

BURBY: Now I don't think the coverage of anything is as good as it can be or should be. But I don't think the New York Times, the Washington Post, certainly the L.A. Times, are satisfied, either. So I think it's going to get better. Last year the Times Mirror corporation paid a lot of money for a Gallup poll on the press. One of the big surprises--to a lot of people in the building but not to me--was that people thought that the press was too cozy with the government, whereas the anticipation was that the poll would show that people thought the press was being too hard on the government. I think to some extent the people are right. I think the press has always understood it, but it's a very hard thing to break up,

because of the beat system. And because of the control government has over information.

I can remember this happening in San Francisco. When I first got there, I got assigned briefly to city hall. I went around and I talked to a lot of people. I forget what the story even was about, but it seemed very interesting. So I wrote a piece about it and nobody else wrote it. It wound up in the paper the next day and then the day after that, I got hit with five exclusive stories from all the other newspapers in town. [Laughter] It was a sort of "welcome to the club" kind of thing. You weren't supposed to do that. You were supposed to sit around and play cards in the press room and share information. Now, that has all changed, but there are still elements of it. If you press too hard, you can get in some difficulty.

VASQUEZ: Do your sources dry up?

BURBY: Sometimes.

VASQUEZ: Does that matter when most sources are listed today as an "unnamed source" or someone in the administration who will comment on the condition that [he or she] not be identified?

BURBY: Sure it makes a difference, because those people have names, even though they're not named. The only reason they talk to reporters is that they are fairly certain that their names won't be in the paper. [Laughter] That requires a certain amount of coziness, as this poll would have it.

I nearly ruined the National Journal once by saying we weren't going to have any more unnamed sources. It lasted for about two weeks and the poor guys kept coming back and saying, "We just can't put this together on a name basis." We talked and yelled and screamed about it. Finally, it was pretty clear to me that they were right and I was wrong.

VASQUEZ: That's a pretty significant change in journalism, isn't it?

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: A pretty significant acceptance on the part of editors to publish stories that way.

BURBY: Well, I'll tell you, my rule was I had to see the names of two people who said the same thing.

VASQUEZ: Whether you ran it or not?

BURBY: No, after this. I finally couldn't live that way. We said, "All right. We can use unnamed

sources, but only on condition that we have two names of people who don't live together and are saying the same thing. I have to see the names." That worked. At least I was able to say, "Okay, what's going in the magazine this week is credible, and with any luck, the readers will think the same thing." A lot of editors operate that way.

Government Control of Information

VASQUEZ: Do you think government is controlling information too much? Just right? Not enough?

BURBY: Well, I think the national government controls it too much. And in strange ways. I mean, you now have the Office of Management and Budget trying to cut down on the number of questions in the U.S. census to save money. Some of those questions are fairly important in drawing a profile of Americans.

VASQUEZ: The Bureau of Labor Statistics has stopped taking statistics on a whole range of very important matters.

BURBY: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: Cumulatively, what's that going to mean over time?

BURBY: I don't know. It can't be good. It cannot

produce the same kind of profile that you used to get when they were asking those questions. I suppose, except for the national government, state governments do a pretty good job of explaining themselves. To the extent people want to know.

VASQUEZ: Is it because administrations at the state level are not as powerful as they are at the national level?

BURBY: There's an absolute, mathematical correlation between the amount of information that comes out of a place and the amount of power it has. As the power goes up, the information goes down.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: Is that right?

BURBY: Well, sure.

VASQUEZ: In a way, the information is power.

BURBY: I don't find it hard to understand. It's self-protection. It's one of the--what is it?--third oldest profession and the second oldest instinct? I don't know. If you can prevent information that's going to make you look bad from going out and not be turned out of office for it, why not, from a political point of view? I don't blame them for doing it, and it doesn't even

surprise me. It's just that we let them get away with it.

VASQUEZ: That's the point I'm trying to get at.

BURBY: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: I'm more concerned in these questions about journalists and journalism, what some have called the fourth estate, perhaps becoming an appendage of the administration, of the executive branch.

BURBY: I don't think that there's a real danger of that as long as you have the L.A. Times and the New York Times and, I think, a couple of other papers, covering Washington with the attitudes that they do. You have enough countersources. People complain about the incredible size of the staffs on Capitol Hill these days.

My view is that if it wasn't for those staffs, you wouldn't know half as much about what goes on in Washington as you do with them. Because a lot of them are every bit as expert in things like arms control, things like defense, things that I think are important because they're so damned dangerous, as the people in the executive branch. Very smart people. A lot of them are people out of the executive branch who

have gotten tired of doing things they don't believe in and go up on the Hill and find a congressman who believes the same way they do and they go to work for him.

When I say it bothers me that we in the newspaper business let them get away with it, I guess it bothers me that they can get away with it, just as much. I'm not sure that if we broke our picks on them, the situation would improve much. But I think that we ought to take a few more swings than we do. Now, that's easy for me to say. I sit out here in Los Angeles. I don't depend a great deal on Washington sources of my own, although I depend some on them. I'm a lot different from a guy who is covering, say, the Defense Department, which is really a great big police beat and operates just like one. And, unfortunately, in the days when I was starting out in the newspaper business, the police reporters I knew all carried guns and badges and were cops. You get something of that at the Pentagon.

VASQUEZ: Reporters begin to identify with those they are covering?

BURBY: Sure, it's the most natural thing in the world.

Like hostages begin to [Laughter] identify with their captors. That's a real danger. Again, fortunately, there are enough people who cover the Pentagon without ever going near it, who have the background. Take a guy like Leslie Gelb. He doesn't have to go to the Pentagon to find out why the Soviets are moving in this direction on arms control negotiation and the Americans are moving in that direction. He's negotiated two arms control treaties. So he knows what it's like in there. So there are enough Gelbs and others on the outside that the Pentagon cannot just say anything it wants to.

There is a legitimate question about where you draw the line on what you say about something important that doesn't get people in dultch. The old rule of thumb used to be that you didn't print stories about troop ships departing from some place. It's a hell of a lot more complicated than that now. But there is still that area, that gray area where you can't be sure whether people are sufficiently entitled to the information and it's worth taking a chance. Whether it's important

enough to know.

The Use of News Sources

VASQUEZ: And to contest the source?

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: We are now in a very volatile situation in the Persian Gulf. An incident very similar to what ostensibly happened in the Gulf of Tonkin in August of 1964 could be kept as a piece of very vital information that would only be reported back to the states by those journalists allowed on the USS Guadacanal and certified by the Defense Department. Is there a danger in getting caught into reporting less than accurate information? How do you check that? How do you correct for that? How do you assure that that doesn't happen?

BURBY: Well, you don't. Are you talking about the attack on the mine layer?

VASQUEZ: Well, I'm talking about something that could happen in the Persian Gulf that could be taken as a green light to take much more drastic military actions. In the Gulf of Tonkin, supposedly, patrol boats from North Vietnam attacked navy ships. Now we know that . . .

BURBY: . . . that's possible. Sure. I mean, I thought maybe you might be talking about the helicopter attack on the Iranian mine layer. There are too many correspondents there around that incident who have been in the Persian Gulf and in the Middle East for too long and whose own reputations are so much at stake that it would be very difficult to fake anything on that one. Even if you assume that the Pentagon would try.

And, you know, the Gulf of Tonkin was not at the outset a fraud. I mean, there were people in Washington who really believed that what they heard from that ship was true. And it wasn't until some of the people on the ship began to wonder whether they had seen what they thought they had seen that these messages began to come in to the White House changing the story a little bit. Well, by that time, it had all picked up so much momentum that the easy thing to do was to go through with it. Let it go. Just hide that other stuff. That was dead wrong, but I don't think that could happen again.

VASQUEZ: A couple of years ago the United State government

invaded Grenada. Journalists were not allowed for very crucial periods of time onto the island to observe, and therefore report, what was taking place.

BURBY: And the ones who got there on their own were arrested.

VASQUEZ: Exactly. Do you think that was a setting of a dangerous precedent?

BURBY: It was an attempt to set a dangerous precedent. I don't think it worked. I covered the Korean War for three months without censorship. It wasn't until November or December of 1950 that they put censorship on. So, from July to December there wasn't any. And there was no problem. None of the reporters wrote anything that put anybody in any more danger than they already were. They finally imposed censorship only because some of the old hands who had covered World War II just were so uncomfortable without it, being left on their own.

It's sort of like the people in Pravda now feel. The old rules used to be fairly easy to follow. Now the rules have all disappeared, and

everyone I've talked to has said, "Jesus, this is so much harder than the old way."

VASQUEZ: They don't know their limits now?

BURBY: They don't know their limits. The only way they're going to find them out is to put their hats on a stick and [Laughter] see if the hat gets shot away. It was the same thing in Korea. Now that's one extreme, no censorship at all. But the business of including out the press on that kind of an operation is an outrage and they got away with it that once. Thank god it was on something small. They just won't get away with it again.

VASQUEZ: What do you think the journalism community has done to mitigate that?

BURBY: Oh, there have been all kinds of conferences and negotiations since then. I think the shoe is on the wrong foot. The military keeps running these dry runs and there are no leaks. So they're making the press prove that it can do that without leaking. Which, again, is no big surprise to me. The press is the most leak-proof institution in Washington. [Laughter] It's everybody else that leaks.

The Media "Leak"

VASQUEZ: It's everybody else? But isn't the leak becoming the only way you get information any more?

Important information, critical information, potentially controversial information?

BURBY: Yes and no. Walter Pincus does not deal in leaks. Or at least he didn't used to. Walter Pincus used to drive the military crazy by going through all the hearing records in the defense appropriation hearings. They stack up eight and ten feet high. Reading every piece of testimony and every chart and every table, he'd find a table on page fourteen that had some numbers in it, and a table on page eight hundred that had some other numbers in it. He'd put them together and he'd write a story. It was all on the record. It wasn't a leak. And it used to just drive them crazy that he was working right out of the public record. I think, to an extent, he still probably works that way. So, no. But it is hard work.

VASQUEZ: And also the public record is constantly being mitigated, isn't it? The public information act [Freedom of Information Act] is not as easy to use to get information as it was, say, five, six,

seven years ago. When you get testimony now as we saw in the Irangate hearings, there are whole pages of blacked-out text.

BURBY: Classified. Oh, yeah. But that's a battle that's been going on for years. It's never going to end. You just have to keep pushing at it. But for a freelancer, the Freedom of Information Act is a lot more difficult now, in just simple ways. They charge more per page than they used to. I was in the Transportation Department when that act went into effect and I remember the way we looked at it was--and we had a lawyer who believed this, who wrote our regulations for it-- "Just shove it all out as far as it will go and anybody who wants it, just ring the dinner bell and they come and get it. No restrictions." That, of course, has changed substantially.

Contemporary Journalism and Politics

VASQUEZ: You have been in journalism for many years. Politics has been an interest of yours all that time. You had the opportunity to serve in a pretty significant administration in the history of a pretty significant state. You've gone back to journalism. You've also gone back to

government. That relationship between politics and journalism, how do you think it's changing? Have you seen a change in the last twenty-five years? And is it for the better or for the worse in a democratic society?

BURBY: I think that--and there's good and bad in both of these--I think that the press covers politics in a much more sophisticated way. It's not the old-fashioned, cops-and-robbers kind of coverage. The newspapers never used to have anybody like William Schneider, who writes for our [Los Angeles Times] Opinion section a lot, who is an absolutely brilliant political scientist. There never used to be anybody writing steadily, analyzing things the way he does. And he's sort of at the top. There wasn't, in my day, a David Broder. Tom Wicker is a relatively new phenomenon.

These are people who have been around politics pretty much all of their working lives and have kept a kind of arms-length, but been close enough to see how it really works. That has been good. The bad of that is that it clutters up the pages with a lot of process that people can't learn much from. [Laughter] I suppose there

ought to be a lot more good-guy, bad-guy, cops-and-robbers reflected in it. So the coverage is better. Whether it's more helpful and useful, I don't know. I can see the point, but it doesn't tell me a hell of a lot about [Senator Joseph] Joe Biden that he thought Neil Kinnock made a great speech on BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and copied it. It says something about his character, but there have been a lot worse characters in American politics who might have been pretty good presidents. I'm not phrasing this very well, but that sort of thing is not very good for getting at the essence of a guy you're interviewing to be manager of the biggest enterprise in the Western world. There are other factors you need to about a man.

When I was younger, I used to say that what ruined American journalism was that the reporters started making enough money to buy Brooks Brother suits and they kept bumping into important people at Brooks Brothers. They thought they were all in the same club. Which is not true. I don't believe that anymore. But there is a danger of that. There is a danger of reporters getting to

the point where they know so much about an operation that they think they could do it better or they begin to think of themselves as part of it. Little things become so commonplace they stop noticing them and they miss an accumulation of indicators. I'm not talking about things that do happen; I'm talking about things that can happen and, I'm sure, things that have happened in the past. Reporters are human, like anybody else. On the other hand, it's better than the old-fashioned, bus-rider approach in which you just sort of rode along and never talked to anybody and just observed and wrote what you thought you saw without any depth to it. There's that possibility.

VASQUEZ: You mentioned earlier the self-interest that needs to grow on a journalist when he's covering one area, one discreet area.

BURBY: Uh-huh.

VASQUEZ: Now that you've had time to think about it, are you more or less convinced about what you wanted to do with the National Journal, and that was to get people to cover different aspects of a process and then bring all the information together,

rather than depend on someone who specializes in a particular area?

BURBY: Oh, I'm more convinced. That's the way we do our research in the Times editorial pages. We go around, individually, and check--touch base--with all the different sides involved in something. It's a much better way to go about it. It's just impractical for any kind of large operation. The L.A. Times cannot have one man assigned to every important issue in Washington, D.C., they've got to split it up by beats. A reader trusts, in a second-hand way, the way an editor does in a first-hand way, a reporter to get it right. I do think that the caliber of the people in the newspaper business has gone up incredibly since I got into it.

VASQUEZ: How about the caliber of politicians?

BURBY: It's gone down. [Laughter] I really believe that.

The Future of Political Journalism

VASQUEZ: Yet the interests of the two seem to have merged. Or at least they seem not to be protagonists in the political process. They seem to be more on the same side, identifying

themselves as part of the establishment, identifying themselves more with authority. Is that a misperception of what seems to be happening now between the press and government?

BURBY: Okay, now we're talking at the margin. We're talking really small increments here. I agree with what the Times Mirror poll found about what the public thinks of the relationship between newspapers and government. But I think the problem is not as large as the public perception of it may be.

I really was starting to build up to that when I started talking about the caliber of these young people. They are so much brighter than the ones I used to know. I mean, Richard Harding Davis I don't know about. He wrote very good stuff, but I just don't know what kind of a man he was. Just take an intern in our office this summer. He speaks Russian, Czechoslovakian, English [Laughter] pretty well, Spanish, and two other languages that I don't remember. All he wants to be is a newspaper man. And he's bright as hell. He is equipped to do what he wants to do in ways that boggle the mind. Now, he's not going

to be sucked into the establishment. They've already tried to recruit him and he said, no he wants to be a newspaper man. He is a presence and a force in his own right.

We've got another one that just joined our Washington bureau, a Rhodes scholar, a very bright man. He is [already] a presence at twenty-six years old, maybe. He is not going to walk across the line, and yet he is going to get all the information he needs to satisfy his own intellectual curiosity. He's a very good analyst. So is this other young fellow.

The newspaper business is full of these people these days. It never used to be. We have a man on our South Bay edition who has a doctorate in mathematics, speaks Russian and did a year at the Harriman School of Russian Studies. He's working as a beat reporter in the South Bay. That never used to happen in the newspaper business, not when I was in it. Not when I started it. But what's constant is that these are bright people and they've gone into honest work.

VASQUEZ: They have to get past editors and editorial boards?

BURBY: Pardon?

VASQUEZ: And they have to get past editors. Their stories will be edited by someone and publishers will determine what they write on or do not.

BURBY: Oh, it's only a matter of time before these people are editors, hiring even brighter people.

VASQUEZ: And this is the trend that you see?

BURBY: I have no doubt about it. I feel very good about it. I had just reached the age, two or three years ago, when I wondered whether what I had been trying to do in the newspaper business was going to have an effect and who was going to take it over when I left. I don't worry about it anymore. I read the applications from these young people who want to come to work for the Times and it's very encouraging. Both along the lines that you're talking about, as to whether they know who they are and what they're there for. And these are not people who just want to be journalists. This is not the Watergate generation I'm talking about. These people are the post-Watergate generation. They're serious observers and analysts. That's what they want to do with their lives. I find that fascinating.

VASQUEZ: At the end of interviews, we normally ask if there's anything that you want to put into the public record or into your oral history that hasn't been covered.

BURBY: I can't think of anything. I already feel as though I've talked [Laughter] too much.

VASQUEZ: Well, I think this is going to be an important interview in this series because of the role of the press.

BURBY: I hope it is of some use. I hope we've covered that. I'd be perfectly happy to go back over some of the closer-in questions about the relation, about the role of a press secretary. If, when you read this over, you find I've sort of screwed it all up and the point hasn't come through.

A Good Press Secretary: Parting Words

VASQUEZ: I appreciate that, because I'll go back and read the whole thing and we may want to do that. But one does occur to me now, and that is: with your experience in observing others, being a press secretary, is that person more concerned with form than with content, with style rather than substance?

BURBY: It depends on the press secretary. I ran into a

press secretary a couple of years ago at a seminar who brought television spots that his governor was using instead of press conferences and showed them. There was this great muttering and murmuring and outrage about this.

There are other press secretaries who, as I hope I did, saw their most important function as that of getting somebody who really had to talk to the governor about something important, into the governor's office, as soon as possible. I suppose that's considered old-fashioned these days, but I don't know a better way to operate. I certainly don't know a safer way for voters to live.

[Laughter]

VASQUEZ: So you end up still believing that a good press secretary, is a bridge from the public to the public official?

BURBY: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

VASQUEZ: And not a shield for the public official?

BURBY: Yeah. But, also a shield when a shield seems appropriate. [Laughter] But not such a big shield that nobody can see around.

[End Tape 4, Side A]