

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

LELAND I. NICHOLS

Governor's Radio-Television Press Secretary
Chief Consultant to the Assembly
1960-1968

November 12, 14, 19 and December 3, 1991
Sacramento, California

By Donald B. Seney
California State Archives



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None

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Leland L. Nichols, Oral History Interview, Conducted in 1991 by Donald B. Seney, California State University, Sacramento, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Program.



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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 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.



ERLAND L. NICHOLS

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

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Claremont Graduate School

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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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University, Sacramento

Ph.D. University of Washington (Political Science)
M.A. University of Washington (Political Science)
B.A. San Jose State College (Political Science)

Interview Time and Place

The interviews took place on November 12, 14 and 19,
and December 3, 1991. The first three were one and one-half
hour sessions. The last session was one hour and fifty
minutes.

All of the interviews took place in Professor Nichols'
office in Mendocino Hall on the California State University,
Sacramento campus.

Editing

Dr. Seney checked the verbatim manuscript of the
interview against the original tape recordings; edited for
punctuation, paragraphing and spelling; verified proper
names and prepared footnotes.

Mr. Nichols reviewed the edited transcript and returned
it with minor corrections.

Papers

Mr. Nichols has no papers relevant to his career.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings are in the University
Archives, The Library, California State University,
Sacramento. Master tapes are deposited in the California
State Archives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Leland L. Nichols was born March 16, 1929 in Hawthorne, California. He attended public schools in Hawthorne and Los Angeles, California and graduated from Hollywood Professional School, a high school, in 1947. He earned a B.A. degree in Sociology in 1950 and a M.S. in Journalism in 1952 from the University of California at Los Angeles. Mr. Nichols served in the U.S. Army from 1952 until 1954.

While at the University of California at Los Angeles Nichols joined with other friends to discuss and take part in politics. It was during this period that he first met Jesse Unruh for whom he would later work. Nichols also formed friendships and alliances with other individuals who would be future collaborators in politics. Among these was Larry Margolis, later a chief aide to Jesse Unruh.

After his service in the army, while completing his master's degree in journalism, Nichols began his career in broadcasting. Beginning as an intern in 1954 with NBC [National Broadcasting Company] news in Los Angeles, he became a reporter/commentator covering political and general news as well as the Democratic and Republican national conventions of 1960.

In 1960 he was appointed Radio-Television Press Secretary on the staff of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. In that capacity he handled the governor's relations with the broadcast media and served as a media advisor. He left the governor's office in 1962.

After leaving the governor's office he joined Jesse Unruh's staff and managed the unsuccessful campaign on behalf of the beaches and parks initiative (Proposition 5) in the June 1962 election.

Following that election he joined the staff of the California State Assembly as Chief Consultant to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and then Chief Consultant to the Assembly. While working for the assembly from 1962 to 1967 he helped to devise and institute the staff system.

From 1968 to 1970 Nichols worked in public broadcasting first as a staff member and then as acting general manager of KVIE TV, Channel 6, in Sacramento, California.

In 1970 he joined the faculty of the Communications Department at California State University, Sacramento. Mr. Nichols retired from CSUS in June 1992 as a Professor of Communication. He now resides in San Francisco, California.

[Session 1, November 12, 1991]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

SENEY: I want to start by asking you about your family and about your parents, where they came from, what they did, what they were like.

NICHOLS: Both parents came from the Midwest as most Californians did in those days. Dad came to California originally to enter UC [University of California] Berkeley. That was during the time of the great rate wars that the railroads were having. So it cost him nineteen dollars to get from Omaha, Nebraska to San Francisco, California.

SENEY: What year would that be?

NICHOLS: 1908 or 1909, I would guess. Originally, he went to Los Angeles and he worked there for a year before he'd saved enough money to enter Berkeley which at that time cost thirty-six dollars a year. He had to work nearly a year to save enough money to go to Berkeley.

SENEY: What did he do?

NICHOLS: He was majoring in electrical engineering. He was expelled from Berkeley because he refused to take ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]. As a Morrill Land Grant Act College, every student had to. Dad was a pacifist, disapproved of wars, and disapproved of helping to prepare for wars. So he was kicked out of Berkeley and transferred . . .

SENEY: . . . Let me ask you where that pacifism came from?

NICHOLS: I have no idea. My grandfather had been a Methodist deacon, very active in the Methodist Church. My grandmother was from a Dutch-French family and though occasionally she would make reference to God, I think she was a pretty thorough going atheist. The result was that [because of] the productive tension between his parents' views of religion, Dad was, as far as the family histories go, from his earliest year an intellectual and religious renegade. He was kicked out of elementary school at one time because his teacher--whose name I remember, Mrs. Crabapple--had asked why human beings had fingernails, and Dad said it was the remains of our claws. He was slapped and expelled because the correct answer had been that God had given

us fingernails to pick up small objects like pins. It was that same attitude that then got him expelled from Berkeley. So he went to Stanford because, at that time, Stanford was completely free. There was no tuition charge. In fact, he got room and board without expense. He dropped out of Stanford one semester short of his degree in electrical engineering because he had gotten a wonderful job with the Edison Company of Southern California. And like many men at that time, [he asked himself] "Why do I need an education when it's only preparing me to get a job that I've already got?"

SENEY: Let me stop you here to ask you . . .

NICHOLS: Sure.

SENEY: Your first name is Leland . . .

NICHOLS: After Stanford University . . .

SENEY: I was going to ask that.

NICHOLS: No, I'm awfully glad that he didn't go to Yale [University]. I would have been called Eli, I guess. [Laughter] Or if he had gone to Tufts [University], I'd been a Bessie. [Laughter]

SENEY: [Laughter] Was there some reason why he was perhaps fond enough of Stanford to name one of his children after its founder?

NICHOLS: Even though he did not have his degree, he was very active in the alumni association; the only charity or the only place that Dad gave a penny except to the support of his family was occasional contributions to Stanford. And I went with him for his fiftieth class reunion. [It was] one of the last outings that Dad and I had together. Great fun.

Having taken the job with the [Southern California] Edison Company, he was then in southern California and after working two or three years there, an old family friend, a woman named Mary Lane and her traveling companion-- these two spinster ladies having their last fling--were coming out west. Mary Lane was teaching in Albion, Nebraska. She and her girlfriend were taking the grand tour west and they were going to end up in Lake Louise and then go back to Nebraska. She looked up the Nichols boys in Los Angeles and something happened. I've never gotten the complete story but I think probably they ended up having sex. At least, Mom then made it as far as San Francisco on her grand tour and caught the next train back to Los Angeles and Dad . . .

SENEY: . . . Now, I'm sorry. This was one of the ladies making the trip?

NICHOLS: . . . Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . This was your mother, then . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Who then married Dad. Except that I think technically they didn't ever get married. At least, I've never been able to find a record of their marriage. Though after fifty years together, it didn't make much difference. But I think Dad objected. Mom was a Catholic, though she was fallen away from the Church. In fact, she had been excommunicated because she got in an argument with the Pope. Mom taught Latin. So she had written the Pope a letter in Latin complaining about the dogma of the Assumption. And the Pope excommunicated her. Mom had the excommunication framed. It always hung in her bedroom.

SENEY: You mean in response to her . . .

NICHOLS: . . . To her queries to the Pope.

SENEY: His response was a document certifying her excommunication.

NICHOLS: Yes, she was very proud of it. Because it was on substantial intellectual grounds that she was expelled.

SENEY: Was this on purpose, do you suppose?

NICHOLS: No, not at all. She was merely trying to engage him in a substantive debate over the fact that it was awfully late to have issued that papal bull, that really should have been done by Peter or one of the early popes. It was much too late to have come to that conclusion. Mom, I think, actually thought that the Pope would behave the way parish priests had, which was to engage her in debate. Mom liked to argue. She anticipated, I think, that the Pope would write her a "Dear Mary" letter and they could carry on this little dialogue. That's not how it turned out.

SENEY: [Laughter] That's wonderful.

NICHOLS: Two years after they were married [if they were]
. . .

SENEY: . . . In what year?

NICHOLS: . . . 1912 or 1913. Their first son was born, and while she was pregnant, Mom lost her hearing. It had been fluctuating before. She had scarlet fever as a child and the assumption is that was its cause. But any rate, from the time when she was pregnant with Owen until I was about twelve--so that's about twenty-five years, twenty-four years--she effectively didn't hear

at all. During my formative years, Mom was effectively totally deaf.

SENEY: How did you communicate?

NICHOLS: She was a brilliant lip reader. She taught lip reading professionally and was legendary in her skills of lip reading. She disapproved--as many people did at that time--of signing because, their argument was, it further stigmatized the deaf. And the fact is, Mom believed that everyone could learn to lip read as skillfully as she. That is simply not true. An awful lot of people simply can't for whatever reason. But Mom taught lip reading and I was one of her best pupils. In fact, sometimes when Mom would have private students at home, if she wasn't feeling well, I would actually conduct the lessons. I was one of her prize students. Which is a great skill, because I still use it. When my kids were little, we would go out to dinner and they would tell me which chair they wanted me to sit in so I could then eavesdrop or lip drop on other tables that they were curious about.

SENEY: Do you still do this?

NICHOLS: I still do. I don't do it as frequently and I'm not as good as I was as a teenager.

SENEY: What difference did it make to you, do you think, that your mother was deaf?

NICHOLS: It's a question that I thought a lot about. Because of the nature of my father and my mother, her being deaf was a source of great pride. Her difference was somehow very special. You know, it's the height of the Depression. My father was in construction; my mother was driving or taking the streetcar to USC [University of Southern California] where she was teaching lip reading to university students. I was enormously proud of her. And I recognize that my pride in my mother was as much based on her difference as it was, you know, on the fact that she was a good cook or any of the things that kids might like their mothers for. My mom was different. And, of course, because in some sense shared that difference, my ability to learn lip reading from her, my ability as a reader, so it didn't separate us. It made it a very powerful bond.

SENEY: Now because she became deaf after she had learned to speak, her speaking was in no way impaired.

NICHOLS: She had one of the most beautiful speaking voices. She had taught elocution and Latin.

NICHOLS: After engineering developed hearing aids so that she could use a telephone, one of my favorite things to do was to call Mom so I could listen to her voice. [She had a] lyrical, beautiful speaking voice. She couldn't sing at all, but her speaking voice was just magical, [I] loved to listen to her talk.

My father was, as those other stories suggest, a congenital debater. There is a story that tells it all. I had gone to the movies when I was seven or eight, or something, before World War II had started. The newsreel had shown images of Benito Mussolini pitching hay on to a hay wagon with the Italian maidens all cheering him on. And he was stripped to the waist and being the man of the people. And I came home and at dinner that night, began to engage my father in a debate. I didn't intend to; I was just telling Dad about how terribly offended I was by this fascist dictator and about the newsreels that made him look like some sort of a hero. And my father began to say the usual things. "He makes the trains run on time," and all the rest of that rhetoric. Now I knew I was losing the argument. Finally, I began to cry. And my mom turned and saw me in

NICHOLS: tears and she said to my father, "Owen, now look what you've done. You made the boy cry." And Dad said, "No, losing the argument is making him cry. He is absolutely right and he knows it, but he is losing the argument. He is going to have to learn to argue better." And I realized that he had not meant what he had said. He was only doing it to challenge me, only to give me what you have to have in good argument which is somebody who is willing to express a strongly held position.

Dad and I were always very close. My parents were forty-five when I was born and they didn't need me. They had two sons. Dad had a son named after him. Mom had a son named after her father. Then I came along, originally diagnosed as a tumor, which happily they didn't remove surgically. Even though it was the height of the Depression, there were other people poorer than we, and one of those people was a woman named Lola Johnson. And my family took her in to live with us. And she became my governess. So though we lived on hotcakes and whatever meat scraps there might be, I was raised by a governess who loved opera and knew American literature, had memorized all of

Longfellow, and was a Whitman fan. So I had these two intellectual parents and a nanny who was enormously literate even though she had grown up in the Ozarks of Arkansas. It was a blessed childhood. No one born to great wealth could have had a more extraordinarily loving, protected, and playful childhood. My grandmother and maiden aunt lived next door, they always had time for me. Lola had time. There were cousins in and out of the house, too, older cousins who thought I was fun to play with, who would pamper me. It was just wonderful. God, what a childhood.

SENEY: What was your father doing by this time?

NICHOLS: Most of the time he worked with and for his brother in a construction company, H. A. Nichols and Sons Construction. Then at the beginning of the war, he built things, he built bridges and banks and stuff.

SENEY: Commercial construction.

NICHOLS: Commercial construction. That's what he had done after he had left the [Southern California] Edison Company. He had gone to work for a major contractor. They built the Santa Cruz pier and they built the Huntington Library. So Dad had been involved in a lot of fairly large projects.

NICHOLS: Then the Depression, of course, hit construction terribly. And it wasn't until federal money began to flow that the Depression broke for us; he built the post office in Gardena, California. My uncle had been gone and Dad had bid the job and got it. So it was kind of a very personal victory.

And we had that night a party, the day the Depression broke. Dad invited all of the subs, the subcontractors, who would now have work to come to our house for a party. We had a large garden in the back. The party began at maybe five in the afternoon. And it was summer time and I was allowed to go to sleep on a blanket out in the yard with the Mexican lather's kids, and with the German electrical sub's grandchildren. And we all just kind of slept on the blankets in the middle of the yard. And the party finally ended sometime probably about 7 P.M. the following day; it lasted little over twenty-four hours. And it was, you know, I don't know, right out of Thurber. The sense was that for us the Depression ended on that day. The next day there would be money, there would be food, we would be able to get clothes, all the stuff. And that was not just for us. It

was right out of some Disney movie. The cement finishers were black, the lathers were Mexican, as I said, the electrical was German, [the] family all spoke German. You know, we looked like we'd been cast by central casting and put this party together to. . . .

SENEY: . . . What year was this? . . .

NICHOLS: . . . That would have been 1937 probably, 1937 or 1938 when they got that contract.

SENEY: So then you'd had a few years of experience with the Depression.

NICHOLS: Yes, but as a little kid growing up with a family that was as close as that one really was, you know, I didn't ever go hungry. Certainly I knew that we were having hot cakes for the third time that week as an entree because that's all that we could afford. But we weren't as poor as other people and it's always noted we were less poor than a lot of people in Hawthorne, California. We didn't go hungry and many families did. So in the middle of the Depression, I still felt privileged.

At the beginning of the war [World War II] my eldest brother Owen had gone into the army air corps and Dad tried to enlist. Of course, he was not allowed to because of his age, so he

applied for and got a position with Reconstruction Finance Corporation that was just then beginning to build defense plants. So he became the superintendent of construction on the synthetic rubber plants in southern California--the Dow Styrene Plant [of Dow Chemical Company] and the other plant. He stayed with that until he retired finally. He retired once at sixty-five. Then one of the other companies gave him forged credentials that said he was sixty. So then he worked for another company for another five years and that company forged him again another set of credentials. So he went to work for the third company, for the Styrene Division of Shell Oil Company at that point that ran one of the other plants in the synthetic rubber program. So Dad finally retired at the mandatory age of sixty-five when he was seventy-four. He managed to stretch that for another nine years with various employers. And then he did all sorts of other things, helped people build houses and stuff.

SENEY: How would you describe him in terms of his character?

NICHOLS: When my father was four years old, on a terribly cold winter night in Nebraska, my grandfather

NICHOLS: was off someplace, I don't know where, I've never heard that part of the story. Grandmother asked Dad to take the horse, named Bessie, out to pasture. And Dad took the horse out of the barn and was leading it across a little bridge across the creek. The horse slipped on the ice on the bridge and in falling struck my father in the forehead and cut out a piece of his bone and exposed his brain. He fell into the water. The water was nearly freezing. So he survived because of the freezing water; it kept him from bleeding to death. Grandmother finally found him and she took him and held him. She sent my Aunt Cora by horse to get the only doctor in town. It was an old Civil War vet [veterinarian] who was now practicing people-medicine in Nebraska. When the doctor came, he said, "The child will not live." But he put some salve on it to keep the wound from becoming infected. And grandmother sat for five days without ever getting out of the chair, defecating, urinating in the chair, eating, because she was afraid to move. Dad regained consciousness in six days and then she held him one more day before she got up and put him to

bed. And as Grandmother told the story, she said, "Oh, my God, did I stink!"

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS That may not have seemed an answer to your question but it was. He lived the rest of his life as a second chance and didn't waste any of it. He was a fantastic storyteller. I'm working on now, and perhaps someday will finish, what is essentially a biography of my father. I've stolen as the title a line from Hannah Arendt, On Human Condition in which he talks about history. It's, "Life while it's lived is chaos, and only when one dies does it become nothing but a story." Dad understood that Hannah Arendt was really wrong, that life while it's being lived is nothing but a story if you have the wit to live a good story. And he lived a wonderful story.

SENEY: Can you remember one of the stories that he told? Tell us one.

NICHOLS: Oh. Thousands. Dad was the superintendent of construction on the Fort Rosecranz project in World War I. He hired a man named Hutchins to hang the doors. Dad went along the next afternoon and here's this row of barracks, half a mile or more of barracks all lined up. Dad

was going along checking the doors. None of them closed. And Dad finally got to Hutchins and he said, "None of those doors you hung close." And Hutchins said, "Well now, Owen, they will. I ain't hammered on them yet."

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: I've had that "I ain't hammered on them yet" story used on me a thousand times because Dad taught us in parable. That was also part of the kind of second chance notion; if you didn't do it right the first time, maybe you could hammer on it, it'll fit. You have another chance. Anyway, there are thousands of those.

SENEY: How do you think he influenced your life?

NICHOLS: He believed that life was a story to be lived. He believed that it was imperative that you be able to take your experience and tell it. As the story about the newsreel suggests, I'd come home from the movies or from school and when at our table, somebody said, "What did you do in school today?" they expected a story. They expected an answer which was itself interesting to listen to. So we lived our lives--I lived my life anyway. I don't know about my brothers--I lived my life because he expected me to be interesting. He certainly was not interested

whether I made money or whether I was a "success," but he did want me to be interesting. And that was really all he asked of me was that I be interesting. Sitting down with him as a young adult and sharing a scotch, having dinner with him, would be good conversation and he could count on me to have that good conversation. My grandmother lived next door, as I said, and when the war broke out . . .

SENEY: . . . This was your father's mother . . .

NICHOLS: . . . My father's mother. Emily Elizabeth Van Slyke. She traced her origins back through the Guerraque, de la Guerraque family to the Huguenots and to Roxanne Bourbon. She was very family proud. When the war broke out, Grandmother moved her little radio into her sewing room and set up a card table for me and got a map of Europe. And it was my job to come home from school in the afternoon and listen to the news broadcasts and plot the war on the map. She called it "our map room." So I started as a foreign correspondent or a war correspondent when I was in the seventh grade. I was my grandmother's news source. She didn't listen to the radio. It was my job to tell her what had gone on. I covered World War II in my

grandmother's sewing room. I can still tell you about Regent Nicholas Horthy of Hungary because his picture was at the bottom of the map.

[Laughter]

SENEY: It sounds like a fascinating family.

NICHOLS: Yes, it was. It was just an extraordinary experience.

SENEY: Let me go back to your mother because you described her abilities and so forth. I want to ask you about her qualities and character.

NICHOLS: I think that she and my father probably fell out of love fairly early on, and it was a relationship [with] considerable tension. And that lasted until, God, after Dad retired or nearly, I guess. In their late or mid-sixties, they fell in love again or fell in love maybe for the first time. Their final years were beautiful together. But it was very, very problematic. Mom, with all those great virtues of hers, also was a terrible martyr. She was a hypochondriac. You ask Mom how she was and she told you in detail. And I'm sure some of [the] conditions were probably real, but mostly it's just that she was a hypochondriac. She had-- isn't it funny how often I still say has--a wonderful laugh and the Irish tradition of

NICHOLS: storytelling was also very strong in her family. And Mom loved to laugh, she loved the party. She loved the gemutlichkeit of the family, and was very close to her family though they lived in South Dakota. They didn't see each other very often. But she wrote to her sister every day of her sister's life, from the time she left South Dakota until her sister's death. Mom wrote a letter every day to Aunt Harriet. And Aunt Harriet wrote a letter every day back to her. And one of the things that happened every evening was to find out what was going on in South Dakota. We got letters from Lake Wobegon, in this case Rapid City, South Dakota, or New Underwood, South Dakota more accurately. Every day there was a delivery. I don't know, did that answer your question? A woman with intense loyalty to her friends, mixed attitude toward her children. She liked my oldest brother. She liked Owen a lot. But I don't think she ever liked David, the brother that is four years older than I am. And she adored me. And I don't know why, but I don't think she or my father ever liked my brother David very much. He was the discard and paid an awful price for

it in his life. And that I find difficult to forgive them for.

SENEY: Tell me about him because I want to know about your brothers.

NICHOLS: Well, my oldest brother took his degree from UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles] in chemical engineering and then . . .

SENEY: . . . This is Owen.

NICHOLS: Owen, Jr. And a week or two after was drafted, well, no, enlisted in the army air corps and spent his entire military career in the training command, teaching flying at first Look Field and various bases around the southwest and the south, did one tour as military government officer in Japan. He had married by that time, a disastrous marriage that he didn't have the wit to get out of. A woman who was psychotic, clinically psychotic. He died. He also had rheumatic fever as a child, so we're not quite sure if the cause of death was acute alcoholism or the heart condition because the heart had been damaged by his rheumatic fever. But he drank very badly at least, after he was no longer actively teaching flying. [He] rose to the rank of full colonel. And I don't know how he did that because he was rarely sober.

Wonderful guy. . A man I adored, but his alcoholism was a constant pain.

SENEY: At what age did he die?

NICHOLS: He died when he was fifty years old. He died of a massive coronary at fifty, leaving three sons, one of whom we subsequently raised, my wife and I. The son left Florida and came out to live with us when he was seventeen and we raised him the rest of his teen years.

SENEY: Let me stop you for a moment just to ask you about your brother Owen. Did you have much of a relationship growing up and later?

NICHOLS: Yes. We were sitting one time in the living room and Look magazine had arrived. Look magazine, in those days, always had a photo quiz. The photo quiz of that issue was of cloud formations. My brother was, at that time, taking a course in meteorology at UCLA. And I had listened to his conversations at the dinner table. I looked at the clouds and I said, "Oh, look, this is the photo quiz. Let's do it." And my brother, twelve years older than I, came over to sort of look over my shoulder. And I identified all the clouds correctly. I knew the difference between cirro-cumulus and a cumulo-nimbus and the cirrus, and I identified each one

of them correctly. And the look on his face has lasted the rest of my life, to paraphrase Lewis Carroll. I saw pride; I saw respect; I saw admiration. And it was the first time that he had ever seen me as anything other than the kid brother, the little kid brother. Suddenly, I was an intellect. That year he had been taking a course, a required course for his major, which was Greek and Latin in Current Use, required for pre-meds or science majors. His gift to me at the end of that Christmas . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

NICHOLS: . . . was his used text book, the Dictionary of Greek and Latin in Current Use. And, of course, that book, that gift from my brother, got me all of the good grades that I ever got on GREs [Graduate Record Examinations] or all those exams that test you on your vocabulary. Well, I'd learned my vocabulary from my mother who taught Latin and from my brother who gave me Greek and Latin in Current Use. I still see a word that I don't know and I'm still flipping pages in that dictionary, trying to find helios. Oh, yes, sun. Let's see heliotrope, turns towards the sun. Good, I know what that word

means because I found it in the book my brother had given me.

SENEY: You mentioned his alcoholism. You weren't only describing an affliction, it seems to me, but you were expressing some disappointment.

NICHOLS: Yes, I know that we are going to leave some material to later but I have strong reasons to believe that my brother was also gay, was also homosexual. He had almost never dated in high school. When Betty began to . . .

SENEY: . . . His wife . . .

NICHOLS: . . . His wife, approach him, and really she courted him, I think that Owen married her because--indeed, as I subsequently did--men in those years believed that all it took was the love of a good woman. I think that when Owen discovered later that his sexuality had not been changed, I think his disappointment in himself was a large part of his [alcoholism]. I don't mean that alcoholism is necessarily conditioned in those ways. I'm sure there are also physiological [factors]. And because she was clinically mad, in and out of institutions, there was no reason not to drink. Even when my father and I would talk about it, Dad would say, "God, I wish he'd stop, but I understand why he

doesn't." The world that he lived in was a world that was not beautiful and in which he was successful on his own terms. And I think that [he was] disappointed, terribly disappointed, disappointed in the kind of father he was because his children have suffered very badly. One of my nephews has committed suicide. The oldest nephew is an alcoholic, the youngest may also be. They've all been infected; whether this is a socially constructed phenomena or a physiological reality, they are damaged children. And to watch that kind of dysfunction happen when we had such good role models. Now I know I'm criticizing him for something over which he had no control, [or] little control, but, you know, my attitude was that, my God, seeing the kind of family I grew up in made you want to reproduce it, made you want to try again to make another family that worked as well as mine did. And neither of my brothers succeeded in that. I think I did.

SENEY: What about David, the next to you in line? What year was Owen born?

NICHOLS: Let's see I'm going to have to do a little arithmetic . . .

SENEY: . . . Maybe we can start with your own . . .

NICHOLS: . . . '29. I was born in 1929. '29 minus twelve is '17.

SENEY: And David was born in . . .

NICHOLS: . . . '24 . . .

SENEY: . . . '24, all right.

NICHOLS: My eldest brother Owen was short and stocky, good body but built like a wrestler. Proud of his body. He worked out, always was trim, played football, was really quite athletic. Brother David looked like my mother's side of the family, like the Lane side of the family, was a Lincolnesque--what is that? Ectomorph. No, that's the other one. Anyway, the tall thin attenuated . . .

SENEY: . . . I think it is ectomorph. Endomorph is the shorter . . .

NICHOLS: . . . That's right, yes . . .

SENEY: . . . Stockier . . .

NICHOLS: He was very, then, ectomorphic, had a very inadequate chin like my grandfather Lane, and was a nerd, went through school as a nerd. Owen was the athlete, the star athlete. David was the nerd. So I could do anything I wanted to because I didn't have to be either one of those. David had been a good student, a very good student, in high school. He was drafted and

went in the service. An unillustrious career in the service, air force enlisted [man], came out, started college and never was very successful in college. Finally did get his Master's Degree, oddly enough in Anthropology at USC [University of Southern California] though he spent his working career in the defense industry, originally, paying his way through school, in the template shop at Douglas [Aircraft] and then was hired away by management in personnel. And he was labor negotiator for Douglas Aircraft until his retirement or until reduction in force. I think he chose to retire . . .

SENEY: . . . He's still alive.

NICHOLS: He's still alive and lives some place in New Mexico. We have spoken only twice since my father's death. He and I were never close and after my father's death there was no reason for us to pretend. So we really haven't bothered. I went to his wife's, his first wife's, funeral and have not seen him since. He's now remarried, and lives some place in New Mexico. I've not heard from him, and his own children don't hear from him. He is leading a very isolated life some place in New Mexico.

SENEY: Can you explain this isolation?

NICHOLS: He didn't have, in the sense that I had, this, you know, warm, supportive family.

SENEY: You said your mother was indifferent to him and your father was . . .

NICHOLS: Mom was indifferent. Dad was indifferent. They were both busy. By that time Lola came along to take care of me. I had a nanny. He was on his own. He was very much the isolate in the family. And I think probably he grew up in a world that could be described as vastly different than the one I grew up in. If Dad would challenge David, David would run from the room. I would stay and fight.

SENEY: Which is what your father wanted.

NICHOLS: Which is what my father wanted. So he considered David kind of a wimp. If he had something to say to David, he frequently would ask me to tell David something that he thought should be done. Has David done that yet? Or would you ask your brother when he's going to do something or other? Not when David was in the room. You know I do criticize Dad. When Dad died, David was living in southern California but Dad named me executor of his will. Just a cruel blow which hurt David terribly. Dad left him the house, left him the cabin, left him his

goods, but he named me executor. David would have been very happy to have that reversed. He might have said, "I don't care about the shit but give me the honor. Trust me." But even in death Dad didn't. So, parents make mistakes, sometimes fairly serious ones.

SENEY: Let me ask you about school. You sounded to me like you must have been a good student.

NICHOLS: I was. The first three schools I went to were school buildings that my father had built, schools to which both my brothers had gone. My brothers were very good in math. I wasn't. My brothers were good at languages. I wasn't. So I had to be very spectacular in something else. So anything that looked like theater I did, anything that looked like writing or creative writing or literature I did. Finally, I was expected in our town to go to the local high school, Liewzinger High School. And I was now facing . . .

SENEY: . . . In Hawthorne . . .

NICHOLS: In Hawthorne. I was facing four more years of being the different brother, so I asked my parents' permission to help me get an out-of-district transfer. So instead of going to Liewzinger, I'd finished elementary school and

NICHOLS: went to junior high school in L.A., an hour and a half by streetcar each way, every day. That gave me most of my studying time on the streetcar. I went to Audubon Junior High and then went to Dorsey High School for one year and then prevailed upon my parents to send me to Hollywood Professional School. At that time the tuition was twenty-five dollars a month. It was a fairly inexpensive, private school. Hollywood Professional had been created as the school for kids working in Hollywood. And if they weren't on the set, they still had classes and lessons to do. So instead of going back to regular high school, they would come to Hollywood Professional. Then, when they were working, there would be a tutor or teacher on the set. There were probably twenty or thirty of us at the high school that were not in show business but had gone there for its academic program. And because I was in show business in some sense. I'd done a couple of things but I didn't really intend to pursue it as a profession. But we had a faculty in the high school of fourteen people, as I recall. All but two had their Ph.D.s, fairly remarkable high school. People who had retired would then take a teaching job.

The woman who taught me geometry, Dr. [Grace] Loffland, had just retired as the chair of the department of mathematics at McGill University. [Laughter] So she did manage to teach me geometry.

SENEY: Were there famous people in the school?

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: Any kids? Any names we would remember?

NICHOLS: Well, I'm not sure any longer. There was an actress, famous, briefly famous. A woman named Debra Paget whom I taught to read because she was behind me in school. Was a slow reader. So.

SENEY: Debra Paget? Is this . . .

NICHOLS: Paget. Yes. Debra Paget who played Indians and . . .

SENEY: Yes.

NICHOLS: During the fifties, I guess she did quite a lot of work. Her brother, Frank Griffon, was in school with us and he was a successful [actor]. Larry Kurt who recently died of AIDS, the original Tony in West Side Story, Larry and I were close friends at HPS [Hollywood Professional School] and his sister and I "dated." I dated her because I wanted to get to know her brother better. I suppose Larry's is

the most distinguished career because there's a Tony Award. A pretty distinguished career. And I think that's probably the most famous of that crowd.

SENEY: Did you fit in pretty well, do you think?

NICHOLS: Yes. It was academically a good school. The people were mature. Most of them worked in show business, in the films. I had a wonderful time. You know, I was student body president, president of my senior class, all the things people interested in politics do when they are in high school. In my final year at HPS, I got a job as a copy boy, runner with ABC [American Broadcasting Corporation] radio. We still had letterhead around that still called it the Blue Network. This was shortly after the breakup of ABC and NBC [National Broadcasting Corporation] and so . . .

SENEY: One was the Red Network?

NICHOLS: NBC was the Red Network and ABC was the Blue Network. Old Mr. [Edward John] Noble who owned the Lifesaver Company had just bought the Blue Network from the David Sarnoff and so I had about a year, I guess, with ABC. And it gave me a wonderful--as it turns out--career-forming opportunity to see a fascinating industry and to

NICHOLS: work around people, particularly in the news side of show business. And that's the point, I guess, at which I decided I really ought to get an education. And my father, as I said, having dropped out of college in his last semester, the only insistence was really, the only absolute was that we all had to get our bachelor's degree. My brothers both by that time had theirs. Owen had his. David was just coming back to school. So I enrolled at UCLA which is where my brother had gone. Close as my father and I were, the fact that he drove me to school that first day to register for classes, and then waited the six hours or more that it took to register. When I came out, he was sitting in our old Buick, parked out on Galey waiting for me. I realized what an important event that was for him. It was really quite unlike him. I mean, it was a powerful gesture of his support that I really hadn't expected. In fact, I was made a little nervous, a little awkward, having my Daddy drive me to school. But I did have the wit to recognize what a gift he was trying to give me. I originally enrolled as a psychology major; after one semester I changed my major to sociology. UCLA had a remarkable Soc

[Sociology] department at that point. Ralph Turner who was president of the American Sociological Association dozens of times was my mentor. [Philip] Phil Selznik was in the department, now a distinguished sociologist. Leonard Bloom. . . . No, Broom. He changed his name from Bloom to Broom which prompted Larry Margolis¹ to say, "A new Bloom sweeps clean."

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: Or maybe it was Frank Mankiewicz. Any rate one of those guys. It was a very powerful department at the time. In fact, the whole school was. [Abraham R.] Abe Kaplan was teaching philosophy. I took aesthetics from Abe Kaplan. I took Shakespeare from [James E.] Jimmy Phillips; I guess his texts are still used by everybody. I took a GE [general education] course in physics from Hans Reichenbach. It was an extraordinary time to be at that school. They had plucked distinguished young faculty from around the country. Then men like Reichenbach who had retired from one career and decided to move to southern California were

¹Larry Margolis, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1988 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.

offered tenured fulls [professorships] at UCLA. I took political philosophy from G.K. Lewis who recently died. G.K. was at UCLA for two years before he went off to write the constitution for Puerto Rico. He had been a student of Harold Laski's. We had a direct connection with the London School of Economics. I got to know G.K. Lewis very well. We became part of a social group with Phil Selznik and G.K. And we had two people in the French department, both of whom had been lovers of--Oh, God, I just lost her name--de Beauvoir, Simone de Beauvoir, [Jean-Paul] Sartre's mistress. So we had a direct link. I took philosophy from Hans Meyerhof who had been also part of the Sartre group in Paris. It was intensely connected to a world much broader than that campus.

SENEY: What years are we talking about here?

NICHOLS: I enrolled at UCLA in January term, Spring term of '48. I think that's true. Yes. Got my B.A. in four years, I guess. Four plus a semester. And was very active in campus politics.

SENEY: I want to ask you about that because you said you were also active in high school. What got you interested in politics?

NICHOLS: Well, you couldn't grow up in my father's house and not be interested in politics, or my grandmother's and not be interested in politics. One of our family friends was the kid who owned the gas station down on our corner named Glenn [M.] Anderson. Glenn ran for city council in Hawthorne, and Mom and Dad helped, financially or walked precincts or whatever people did. Glenn then that year or two after that when he was mayor, he organized a thing called the Hawthorne-Laundale Democratic Club which was the first of the Democratic clubs in California. No, Alan Cranston did not start the CDC [California Democratic Club]. Glenn Anderson did. Glenn, hear that. I know the history. [Laughter] I began going to meetings of the Hawthorne-Laundale Democratic Club and was vice president when I was, I think, seventeen. [Congressman] Cecil [R.] King was running for re-election in '48. And [United States President] Harry Truman was running for President. And Glenn needed somebody to sort of operate the Democratic party headquarters in Inglewood. And since I was an officer . . .

SENEY: . . . Would this be L.A. County Democratic headquarters?

NICHOLS: Yes. No. No, no. The district headquarters, the Cecil King 17th Congressional District headquarters . . .

SENEY: OK.

NICHOLS: My God, I even remember the numbers. And Cecil was at that time dean of the California [congressional] delegation. So Glenn put me in charge and I ran the headquarters since I had the time and I could do it. So I staffed with occasional other people. Pretty much I ran the 17th C. D. [Congressional District] headquarters.

SENEY: What was required of you? Remember what you did?

NICHOLS: Oh, I answered telephones. I ran the mimeograph machine an awful lot. I handed out bumper strips. I called people for contributions. You know, it was a very low-key operation. We had a lot of the other club people who would come at night to stuff envelopes and do the mailing and things, but I was pretty much the only staff during the day. And then we'd arrange events for the night, fund raisers, the usual stuff. I was learning what people did to make politics work. I said to my father one night something about, "All this work for nothing because

NICHOLS: obviously Harry Truman isn't going to win." And Dad said, "He won't if you don't vote for him." And I said, "What?" And he said, "He will win if you vote for him." So thinking my father had suddenly taken leave of his senses or had gone mystical on me, I was really not prepared as my father was. My father said the next day, "I told you he was going to win. Have faith in me. I told you Truman was going to win. America couldn't elect that little, pompous [Governor Thomas E.] Tom Dewey for the president. Don't be silly. Of course, not." Of course, Dad also thought, as I did, that [Governor] Adlai [E.] Stevenson would win and I still vote for Adlai Stevenson. [Laughter]

So at UCLA during those years I was quite active in politics. In my high school years the Young Democrats had just been invented and I guess the first Stevenson campaign was when the Young Democrats really did get very active. We had an office downtown in some hotel or other. And I spent a lot of time down there doing what kids do in politics. After I got to UCLA my political involvements were chiefly campus stuff. Occasionally, I would work in some assembly race but it was just campus politics.

I got involved in University Religious Conference which was the sort of off-campus center for humanist studies, I guess, under the guise of religion, but there were an awful lot of people involved with this conference who couldn't spell God's name.

SENEY: More of a social situation?

NICHOLS: Yes, and it was for political activists. It really was for people who thought that they could change the world if they could just get a couple of people to help them; where do they meet? It turns out that they met at the University Religious Conference. Originally, it'd been an old Spanish building at the south end of campus on Le Conte. It was an exciting, intellectual environment. It was kind of the coffee house of other people's later years at other institutions. We didn't have coffee houses in UCLA in Westwood village; we had the University Religious Conference as our sort of third place. When you weren't in class, you weren't out on a date, or you weren't eating, you hung out at the University Religious Conference and talked to other people who thought that they could make the world

different. We thought of ourselves as a major change agent.

SENEY: While you were at UCLA, I take it this was still during the period when there would have been a lot of World War II veterans on the GI bill, was that so?

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: Were they making their presence felt?

NICHOLS: Not much, no. They really weren't. And I don't know if the statistics would bear this out, but my impression is that the relatively less expensive schools like UCLA didn't get nearly as many GI students as did a school like USC. That is, if Jesse [M.] Unruh had the choice, which he did with the GI bill, he could go to any school in L.A. that he wanted to, so he went to USC because you got more for your buck. In this case, you weren't spending anything. I think a lot of people made those decisions. They went to Stanford and they went to USC. They went to high price schools for free. I didn't have essentially any involvement. I can't, as you asked the question, I can't think of a single [person]. I knew some because I worked on campus for the disabled students. I pushed wheelchairs around and got paid for it.

SENEY: Some of those would have been veterans?

NICHOLS: And those were all veterans, yes. But not all, some of them had disabilities of other sorts. And, of course, my brother was at UCLA and he'd just gotten out of the air force. So yes, there were some, but in terms of the campus politics, there was only one person, a guy named George Mayer, that I recall had any political involvement at all. Campus politics was not, on our campus, where vets went. They weren't involved, in my years made no appreciable impact at all. I only ran for office on campus once. And I was defeated, quite appropriately, but I was very involved in . . .

SENEY: . . . What did you run for?

NICHOLS: Oh, what was it called? Rep-at-large. Representative-at-large. I lost to a guy who is now, I think he is a judge in L.A. county. He was much the better candidate. You know, and again, I think whatever the reason for interviewing somebody who is homosexual, you always get this--either expressly or implicitly--this same story. There were a lot of things that I might have done that I chose not to do or could not do for fear that I would risk exposure. The reason that I dated Pi Phi and

Tri Delts was--I dated my way through the whole Pi Phi house, I think--was because if you dated a lot of women and didn't stay with any of them very long, then you didn't have to go to bed with them. So I could preserve my reputation as a big man on campus, as a Don Juan, without ever having to prove it to anybody. I didn't want people peeking. I knew my secret. So both things I did and many of things I did not do are directly anchored in my awareness that I was gay.

SENEY: Let me say that when we began to speak I said for the purpose of the interview, we might save these matters until the end, but I think that perhaps that is . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . Not necessarily a wise thing to do in terms of presenting a coherent picture so why don't . . .

NICHOLS: . . . As in this incident where it seems to be the only appropriate explanation . . .

SENEY: . . . Sure . . .

NICHOLS: . . . I would probably do that though . . .

SENEY: . . . All right . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Though in terms of a coherent story, I would certainly leave it to later. UCLA treated

me as if I were an intellectual. And I had toyed with the idea before that I might be. But then I also thought maybe I was an actor and I thought maybe I was whatever. But Phil Selznik and Ralph Turner, those two faculty members in particular, and then my falling in with . . .

SENEY: Let me stop you for a minute, because I did want to ask you about the faculty whom you, I think quite rightly, raved about. These are very prominent people that you mentioned. Did they, apart from being great professors, did they have an impact on your thinking . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, yes . . .

SENEY: . . . On your political views?

NICHOLS: Yes. The notion that because a professor might have 200 students in a room, and therefore he didn't want to get to know me was unthinkable. You know, I was pushy, pompous. I sat in the front row. I had the answers to the questions. And when the class was over, I went to coffee with the professor because that's what I'd done in high school. That was the kind of family I'd grown up in. Hans Meyerhof, was, I think, a tremendous and distinguished philosopher. If someone was talking to me after class, Meyerhof would wait until I was finished, so we could

NICHOLS: walk to coffee together. I'm sure I wasn't a fascinating conversationalist but I probably listened pretty well. Turner was not quite as approachable. He didn't need teenage friends as perhaps others did. But I saw him on campus at UCLA a year ago and he stopped and chatted in the hall and he remembered my name, forty years later. And I did some research for Ralph Turner. So that developed a bond.

I assumed at the time that I was going to go on and get my Ph.D. and teach sociology. I had met the woman that I subsequently married and that was getting pretty serious. And I saw where that was headed so I fled from her and began dating; by that time I had gotten my B.A. and I was dating. I was now in graduate work in UCLA in sociology and I began dating a woman with the improbable name of Marybob Cross who had gotten her B.A. at the University of Arkansas. She was a southern belle who wore her sorority pin to graduate seminars. Improbable artifact. I broke up with Marybob, got back together with Liz. I proposed, she accepted, and we got married, and I got drafted.

SENEY: Is that the Korean War?

NICHOLS: This is Korean War. At that point, this is toward the end of the Korean War and the military had decided to pull in all those people who had gotten military deferments. So I served in a unit at Fort Ord in which there were two of us that did not have advanced degrees. [William] Bill Edlund, who is now senior partner in Pillsbury, Madison, and Sutro, Frank Loy, who is president of the German Marshall Fund, we were all in the unit together. It was an extraordinary. . . . It was a rich, intellectual environment at Fort [Ord].

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

SENEY: We were talking about your military experiences. We were at Fort Ord with very distinguished people.

NICHOLS: Well, yes, Liz and I had just got married. We had . . .

SENEY: . . . Why don't you give me her full name? . . .

NICHOLS: Elizabeth Beatrice Stern Nichols. She was--and we will get more about this--Liz's parents had put their two daughters on the last children's train out of Berlin for Denmark. The children, Ann and Liz, were ultimately sent off to England where they were living in Jewish refugee

hostels, homes. And miraculously, both of her parents also escaped; Reimi and Susie got to England; Rheinhardt Paul Sigismund Stern and Susie Marie Goldschmidt Stern, incredible people, the Sterns. Anyway Liz and I had married. And I want to talk more at some point about Liz. Incredible. But Liz and I had married and she was still finishing her teaching credential and I was trying to make a living mostly at free lance medical writing . . .

SENEY: . . . You were out of the military now? . . .

NICHOLS: No, this was before the military.

We were quickly going broke. What little savings we had we were quickly exhausting. I was working for an outfit called Hale Labs as a medical writer and trying to write for Red Ryder comic books which John Frankenheimer then edited. [Laughter] Frankenheimer didn't like my comic book writing much. But I was doing anything to make money as a writer and not making enough. Then I suddenly got drafted which was the only thing that saved us because I don't know what I would have done if I had had to take a real job. I was sworn in on the twenty-seventh of November [1952]. We had Thanksgiving together the next night. Then on

NICHOLS: Friday after Thanksgiving I was shipped off to Fort Ord, a very miserable, young man. I had injured my knee about a year earlier--some years later it required surgery--at any rate, I limped badly. And I thought that would keep me out of the army. It didn't. But I got to Fort Ord and got into this basic training unit. Because I didn't walk very well, people carried me; two guys would suddenly decide Nichols needs to go there and we are going to go some place, out to formation or whatever, and so they would grab me one on each side and they carried me where ever I wanted to go. The company commander saw what was happening and decided that the poor man shouldn't really have to do all that walking. So when the formation was dismissed or they were marched off to do something that soldiers do, I would wait for the company commander, Captain Porter L. Bayman, who would come by and pick me up in his car and drive me out to the rifle range or drive me out to whatever we were doing. The result was that wherever I went I was utterly relaxed and never fatigued, so I ended up being the best marksman in those years at Fort Ord because I was always rested. I would drive out. He'd pull right up next to the

firing range. I would get out of the car. He'd hand me my rifle. I would lie down and I would shoot. Then I would hit everything. And then I would get back in the car and he'd drive me back to the base. It was wonderful. I loved Fort Ord. My wife Liz knew some people, and had a friend whose husband was at Fort Ord in permanent party, so she through him got me assigned permanent party at Fort Ord. I taught at the army administration school.

SENEY: Excuse me. "Permanent party?"

NICHOLS: Permanent party means you're now part of the Fort Ord staff. You're no longer in training to be shipped off to some place. Now I was permanently attached to Fort Ord as a teacher in the Fifty-first Field Artillery Battalion which was the headquarters for army administration school. We trained company clerks. We had our school commandant, a man named Enrique La Luz. Spanish was his main language. The idea of standing up in front of lots of people and lecturing struck him as being much more hazardous than combat. So he had such respect for those of us that talked English fluently that he said we weren't to use our voices more than fifteen hours a week. And we had a maximum

teaching load of fifteen hours a week in the army. Well, that gave me an awful lot of time to play volleyball down at Volleyball Beach in Carmel while Liz was working on the post. You know, I worked less than I work now. They were great people to be with. We'd taken over one of the cadre rooms in the school building and we'd put a "Do not enter, authorized personnel only" sign on the door and put special locks on it. And we ran a charade game that lasted nonstop for about two months. Somebody was always there keeping the charade game going. I recall one round that my team lost because we were unable to act out the title of the opera "Ariadne Auf Naxos." We couldn't get our team to understand that.

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: I mean, God, were we snobs. It was practically the Chardonnay and brie set. [Laughter] Got out of the army . . .

SENEY: . . . How long were you in?

NICHOLS: Well, two months short of two years. At that time you could get out two months early.

SENEY: Were you an officer?

NICHOLS: No, no. Enlisted man, enlisted man.

SENEY: You hadn't gone through ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] at UCLA?

NICHOLS: No. ROTC, you were only required to do it for your first year or first semester or something.

SENEY: And you did it . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . Despite your father's objections. Did he have anything to say?

NICHOLS: I talked to him about it. And Dad's position was then if he had it to do over again, he would have stayed in Berkeley. He would have the ROTC. He said that he really thought that probably it was vitally important that we train more pacifists to be army officers because that's where they are really needed. So he encouraged me. He would have been unhappy if I'd gone on into the military, but he encouraged me to do the ROTC thing, to shake them up.

At that time it was possible to get out up to two months early if you were entering a graduate, or an academic program. It had to be a terminal program. It had to be no more than a two-year program. There were all sorts of conditions. Well, the only thing I could do was to go to journalism school at UCLA because that was a two year Masters, and the timing was

right. I could get out a full two months early if I went to UCLA. The Dean of Journalism was Joe Grant, former president of the University of Oklahoma and former president of Henry Holt [Publishing Co.] Joe was teaching and had just founded the journalism school at UCLA.

SENEY: You say Henry Holt, you mean the publisher?

NICHOLS: The publisher, yes. So, we knew Joe well. I applied and was admitted to the journalism school. I had no desire to be a journalist at all. It was just a way of getting out of the army two months early. And that was reason enough. And there may have been a reason for that.

SENEY: You'd never thought about journalism in school before.

NICHOLS: No, no, no. And really had no interest. Indeed, had very little respect for that craft or profession. But I had a very good time in journalism school except for the fact that they discovered early on that I couldn't spell and that meant I would not be interned to the L.A. Times or any real newspaper. So they gave me my internship at NBC where it didn't make a damn bit of difference whether you could spell or not. Also while I was at UCLA in graduate

school, I wrote an article for the paper published by the graduate school as a lab paper. And I had done an article about the impact of television on theater, arguing that there really was a reverse trend that we were already seeing, that theater was increasingly going to be adopting some of the unique styles and forms of what I would now call the rhetoric of television. Kenneth McGowan who is now a building at UCLA, then Kenneth McGowan--distinguished director, extraordinary man--was teaching play writing at UCLA and edited the National Journal on Radio, Television, and Film. He had read my article in the campus newspaper and asked me to rewrite it for the journal. So that was my first publication in an academic journal. I shared the page literally--because I still have a reprint some place--with T.W. Adorno whose article faced mine, and it was on the impact of the small screen on theater. I was very proud of myself. Wonderful.

SENEY: Well, you're still smiling.

NICHOLS: I am still smiling. I'm . . .

SENEY: . . . Still proud of yourself. . .

NICHOLS: . . . Still proud of myself. I'm still saying, "Thank you, Kenneth McGowan. That was very nice of you." [Laughter]

SENEY: [Laughter] All this, if I may interrupt for a moment, sounds very serendipitous. I mean . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, it is. . .

SENEY: . . . Going to journalism school and . . .

NICHOLS: You know I have played no significant part in this blessed life. Perhaps my mother who was sometimes active in Unity Church might well have said, and often did say, that "all things work together for good." My job was to recognize what of the opportunities that were available would be the most fun, or more particularly would tell the best story. So there I was at UCLA being interned at NBC because I couldn't spell and was a reasonably accomplished pre-copy boy at NBC.

SENEY: What did you do at NBC? What was that like?

NICHOLS: Well, at that time . . .

SENEY: . . . This, I take it, was NBC in Los Angeles.

NICHOLS: NBC-L.A. Yes. A man named John Thompson had just been transferred down from San Francisco as west coast vice president for news. John and I got along well. And at the end of my internship, John offered me a job as a copy boy.

I took the month of August off, I think, after my graduation, my Masters, and then went right back to work at NBC, doing much of the same kind of stuff that I had done when I was an intern.

SENEY: This would have been what year?

NICHOLS: 1954, 1953.

SENEY: Do you recall what the pay was like and the emoluments of office?

NICHOLS: Well, let's see. I probably was getting paid at the beginning \$10,000 or \$11,000.

SENEY: Was that good pay?

NICHOLS: It was very good pay. It was excellent pay. Of all the people who graduated in my class. . . . Leo Rennert of The Sacramento Bee, was in my class. It was decades, I think, before Leo's salary at the Bee matched my salary as a copy boy at NBC. I went to work at NBC in August, I think actually. That same year, Christmas day a pilot flying into LAX [Los Angeles Airport] sighted a fire in the Malibu [Canyon] and notified the tower. The fire burned ferociously. It was one of the worst fires that the Malibu had ever had. Everybody on the staff worked on it. I'd gone out to set up a remote broadcast booth, had rented a little real estate office for them, for NBC. So I was running back

and forth. These were twenty-hour days. I mean you'd sleep . . .

SENEY: The fire went long enough that you made those kind of arrangements? Let me suggest that we were a long way from satellite dishes, are we not?

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, yes.

SENEY: . . . This is a fairly complicated and equipment intensive operation.

NICHOLS: We shot film in old Bell and Howell sixteen millimeters [cameras], and somebody had to run the film back to the lab. And I often did. We did have phone lines so we could go live on radio. But there were no satellites, there was no video tape.

SENEY: No video tape machines.

NICHOLS: Video. We were using audio tape, of course, to tape. The development of the tape had reached radio by that time. Footnote--can I backtrack?

SENEY: Sure.

NICHOLS: The reason that the United States had tape recording at that point is--or electronic recording--our chief engineer at ABC, back when I was a copy boy, was a guy named Bev Palmer, Beverly Palmer, a man. Beverly Palmer had been with the forces that marched into Berlin in

NICHOLS: World War II. He was a radioman. As they marched in, he kept hearing the Berlin Philharmonic playing. And he was pretty damn sure that they weren't really still in Berlin playing. So the first thing he did when he got to Berlin was to try and find the Rundfunk to see how they were doing it. And he brought back the wire recorders that had been invented by the Germans. Stole it. Then he and Bing Crosby formed Ampex with this stolen equipment that Beverly Palmer had brought back from Germany. Which is a footnote to history that I'm not sure even the pioneers in broadcasting talk much about. [Laughter]

On the twenty-ninth or thirtieth, the thirtieth of December, I guess, the crews were exhausted. The fire was pretty much out. We were coming up to the weekend. My boss, John Thompson, was just leaving to go back to New York for the year-end, the January first conference that they did every year. So before he left he called me at home, and said, "Lee, will you go out and man the radio booth? We haven't got anybody else that I can send out there. I don't think there's going to be need for you to do anything because . . ."

SENEY: . . . Still at the fire . . .

NICHOLS: . . . "The story's dead, but go out to the fire. I promised that we will have a reporter there at all times." So I drove out, thinking there were lots of things I'd rather be doing on New Year's Eve than that. As I was pulling up in front of the little real estate office that we were using as our broadcast booth, the engineer was out waving at me frantically. And I got out of the car and he said, "You've got ten minutes to do a live feed to the network." In ten minutes, I wrote a spot. The first time I had ever been in front of a microphone, I had the entire NBC network at my disposal. You know, everybody in the news business has a story like that of the lucky break. The network liked that first spot. They then called back and asked for a background piece, a five minute profile on the Malibu. So I then sat and wrote this five minutes of semi-poetry, picking stories that I'd remembered that my father told me about the family wars when they used to shoot at people trying to enter the Malibu, and a lot about the film colony, and why the film colony was in the Malibu. Late that night, midnight or so, I got a phone call from John Thompson from New York--a little bit in his

cups at 3 A.M. or whatever it would have been in New York, probably quite a bit in his cups--but he said he had to listen all day long to rave reviews about this fucking new reporter, commentator that he'd hired, and I was to get my ass down to AFRTA [American Federation of Radio and Television Artists] and get myself a union card because he'd told them that he'd hired me as a commentator . . .

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: . . . To replace Chet Huntley when Huntley went to New York. And I goddamnn well better be a commentator by the time he gets back because, "If they ever find out that I ever sent a non-union scab out to cover the fire it's my ass, Nichols."

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: So I went down to AFTRA the next day and got myself a union card in the . . .

SENEY: AFTRA is?

NICHOLS: American Federation of Radio Television Artists. I couldn't get a card in the broadcast unions because I didn't have any technical background at all. You had to have a first card, first ticket, as an engineer in order to get a NABET card.

SENEY: NABET is?

NICHOLS: National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians. So the only thing I could get was the performer cards. So I went from copy boy to network news commentator over that weekend. And the following Monday morning, I was a network news commentator.

SENEY: How did you feel about what you had written and how it went? Were you surprised at your success?

NICHOLS: I have it around here somewhere, a copy of it. I saw it the other day when I was cleaning up something. It reads very well today, forty years later. It was well written. It was appropriately emotional. It's as good a piece of writing as I ever did for broadcast. Thank you, Mom. Thank you, Dad. Thank you, Lola. Thank you, Grandma. For all those people who trained me to be a story teller. And I had five minutes to tell a story.

SENEY: What about the delivery? Were you nervous?

NICHOLS: There wasn't time to be.

SENEY: The microphone didn't have horns on it?

NICHOLS: I'd had enough live theater experience that the idea of the performance didn't bother me. I was much more concerned with the content. You know, was I getting too poetic? Was this too much a

kind of fanciful essay? When I put that white horse against that scorched black mountain? The fact is there was a white horse and there was a scorched black mountain, so at least, they were anchored in some reality.

SENEY: This must have been quite a fire. Give me a minute or two on the extent of it.

NICHOLS: Well, it was. Well, I suppose its importance was largely a function that nothing else was happening in the country that week. So it was the big story. A number of show business homes, show business folks' homes, burned. It burned up Corral Canyon and into Big Topanga. In fact, it burned all up to Lake Sherwood. It was one of the largest brush fires that they'd ever had in Malibu Canyons. A number of homes were destroyed. I don't think there was any loss of life. Yes, there was, too,; one fireman died. It was, you know, the earthquake. It was the flood. It was the, you know, that we are all familiar with, that captures the headlines for a week. It's the Oakland fire [October, 1991]. It was that same kind of thing, the same sense that this was a totally massive disaster.

SENEY: By Monday you're a . . .

NICHOLS: . . . By Monday I'm a network news commentator. And two weeks later, or three weeks later, I had my own show on Sunday.

SENEY: What was the show?

NICHOLS: The news division had to fill fifteen minutes on radio before the game. I don't know what the game was, probably baseball at that time of the year, I guess. Given the time differences, we had a fifteen minute hole that we couldn't fill with a pre-game thing for the midwest network, the midwest and east. So they gave me fifteen minutes to do Lee Nichols Reporting in which I could talk about anything I wanted to. Then later they gave me that same thing on television which gave me a similar fifteen minute slot to fill.

SENEY: Fifteen minutes may not seem like a long time to someone watching but to someone filling it, it's a long time, is it not?

NICHOLS: Yes. And I filled one of the shows with the House Un-American Activities Committee holding hearings in San Francisco--and you have undoubtedly seen this footage--of the firemen hosing the kids down the steps.

SENEY: Yes.

NICHOLS: Well, when I was doing the TV show, the commentary show, I had my news editor put it in a continuous loop. So I did the entire show narrating over one piece of footage of just the bodies being washed down, washed down, washed down, washed down, washed down, washed down, washed down. And I said this is what I'd done. I said, "Americans need to see this not once, not twice, but until you vomit. You need to see this scene." Then I did this blistering attack on the House Un-American Activities Committee. I got a call Monday morning from Rueven Frank, president of NBC News. "Lee, we've had an awful lot of complaints about that show of yours on Sunday. American Legion is threatening us. The Veterans of Foreign Wars are threatening us. There is even some talk of a congressional investigation." And I said, "I'm sorry." And he said, "Sorry? I am proud as hell of you. Keep up the good work."

SENEY: Is that the reaction you expected?

NICHOLS: No, no. No, I thought if I'm not willing when I've got a chance--the network at my disposal and I've got a chance to talk about the House Un-American Activities Committee--if I don't say something. . . . You know, this is the west

coast story of the week; I am the guy who is supposed to be on top of that story. Damn it, this is not a news show. This is a commentary show and I am going to tell the world what I think. And if I get fired, I've gotten fired for the best of all possible reasons.

SENEY: Were there any other repercussions?

NICHOLS: Nope, I got promoted. It was because of that show I got offered the Chicago bureau. Rueven decided I had guts. I had balls. I had integrity.

SENEY: And from the show you now go to Chicago?

NICHOLS: Well, that leaps us over the '60 convention stuff. But, yes, it was after that. And there is obviously another year, or two years, because I now get to 1960. By that time I was doing more work on television and less work in radio. I had been the west coast voice of Monitor Radio which was very big at that time. So a lot of my work was just doing feature stuff for Monitor. But my obligation . . .

SENEY: . . . What does that mean, feature stuff? What were some examples?

NICHOLS: I'd gotten wind that the Hearsts were going to turn over San Simeon to the state of California. I called a friend in Sacramento who confirmed

that the state was, in fact, going to take title. I then called the Hearsts to ask if we could go do a story before [the transfer], so we could have the story in the can on the day that they did the transfer. And the Hearsts said yes. So Liz, several months pregnant, and I flew up to San Simeon--chartered--and were hosted by the Appersons, by Randolph Apperson and his wife, for two days. As we did that first--we did that for both radio and TV--the first coverage of San Simeon, we had it all in the can and Monday when the state announced that they were going to accept the gift of San Simeon, NBC had the story already. We scooped Life Magazine and CBS. And I did major radio features on it.

SENEY: So to get the time sense right on this, your major break at the fire, you've described, comes right around January 1, 1955.

NICHOLS: That's right.

SENEY: And so between 1955 and . . .

NICHOLS: . . . 1960 I was covering news.

SENEY: You had your commentary.

NICHOLS: I did a commentary show Sunday. Generally--not all that time--but for probably a year of that time. I was doing Monitor Radio. I was

covering fires and drownings in backyard pools and politicians and the Confidential [magazine] trial and Commonwealth Club speakers and interviewing [President of Zambia] Kenneth Kaunda at the Commonwealth Club and [W.] Averell Harriman. You know, there are great little vignettes in all of that. A wonderful time. Because I liked telling stories, it was not only a way to make a living telling stories, but the stories I was telling I could then come home and tell at the cocktail parties. We were hot on the cocktail circuit. All the fame I could want. One time I had gone down to see my father in Hawthorne. We walked up to the market and Dad was paying. And the clerk kept looking at me. And finally she said, "You're Lee Nichols, aren't you? Can I have your autograph?" My father said, "That is not Lee Nichols. You have him mistaken with that man on television." [Laughter] We walked out. Dad was not pleased. My watch isn't running. Isn't that funny I have no idea what time it is.

SENEY: It's about twenty minutes to four.

NICHOLS: To five.

SENEY: I'm sorry. To five.

- NICHOLS: I just bought this watch and the little second hand goes around but the big hands don't move. I think I take this back to the folks who sold it to me. I have one where the other hands go around.
- SENEY: What was your father's purpose here? Was he just being funny?
- NICHOLS: Oh, he was just being funny. And probably. . . . Well, no, no, no
- SENEY: . . . And maybe a little jealous?
- NICHOLS: No, it's something more important. And I have to leap ahead now to illustrate that. When I first started teaching at Sac State [California State University, Sacramento] part-time, the Government Department, teaching Wilhelm's
- SENEY: . . . Gary Wilhelm
- NICHOLS: . . . Gary Wilhelm's Public Opinion class, because that was the first year that Gary was ill and I came in to cover that class. During that period when I was part-time in the Government Department, some publisher sent me a book addressed to Professor Nichols. So I clipped out the label, "Professor Leland L. Nichols, Department of Government, California State University." And in my weekly letter to my dad, without explanation, I dropped that

label in, knowing how proud he would be of me. His letter, his reply talking about the dog and the fact that the fuschias were in bloom and whatever, and then there was a P.S. [post script], "I am returning the label which you dropped inadvertently in the envelope with your last letter. For a moment, I thought that you had done it to impress me but I knew better. I knew you would never stoop to that."

SENEY: [Laughter] And he knew full well. . . .

NICHOLS: [Laughter] He knew exactly what I was about. In his own way saying, "Lee, the reason I respect you and love you has nothing to do with titles before your name or letters after your name and does not have to do with some clerk in a store asking for your autograph. Don't you dare pull any of those tricks on me. I know who you are and I love who you are."

SENEY: Could we go back to the period between 1955 and 1960, before we get to the convention? You were living then in L.A. and working out of L.A.

NICHOLS: We . . .

SENEY: . . . But I take it because you mentioned the Commonwealth Club . . .

NICHOLS: . . . I don't mean Commonwealth Club. I mean the World Affairs Council.

SENEY: . . . So we are not, we're talking about the . . .
.

NICHOLS: . . . L.A. World Affairs Council, not the
Commonwealth Club. . .

SENEY: . . . Which is San Francisco . . .

NICHOLS: Same institution. Filled the same niche. Yes,
when I got out of the army and was working in
the. . . . Liz and I were originally living with
her parents who had plenty of room. Then we had
the child and so we were out house hunting. One
day we found this great duplex. So Liz and I
had this great inspiration and we went home and
talked to her parents about it, that we loved
being with them. We loved having built-in
babysitters and would they be interested in
selling their house and going in jointly with us
on this duplex which we certainly couldn't
afford on our own. And so her parents
immediately said yes. They sold their house.
They did a 50 percent down payment on the
duplex. They then owned their half. We paid
the very minimal mortgage payments, on whatever
it was, I don't know, of a \$70,000 loan to buy
this two-story duplex.

SENEY: Sounds like a nice place.

NICHOLS: By Century City. Oh, yes. Wonderful . . .

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Session 2, November 14, 1991]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

SENEY: Good afternoon, Lee.

NICHOLS: Glad you're here again. I had great fun the other day.

SENEY: Let me ask first of all. You had five children.

NICHOLS: That's right. Yes.

SENEY: Why don't you mention them briefly. Their names, and when they were born, and . . .

NICHOLS: Well, let's see. I can do their names and I can approximate their ages. But when they were born and details like that, Liz, my wife, was always in charge of. So I'll only come close. Laurie is our eldest. Laurie, now Hensley, and she is the president of a public relations firm here in Sacramento, Debensik-Hensley. Husband, Jim. Laurie was born when we were at Fort Ord when I was still in the service. Dana is our second daughter. We had a still birth between. That was when I was still with NBC and I was just getting ready to go overseas and do six months or so as a foreign correspondent. This was a full

term stillbirth that was very devastating to both of us. Dana was born two years after that. She is married to a man who teaches at Sacramento City College. And they have two sons, my only grandchildren. Matthew, our son--let's see, Laurie is thirty, Dana is twenty-seven; and Matthew--is twenty-five, twenty-six. Those are approximate. Let's see, Laurie took her degree, finally, from California State University, Sacramento, having done work in Grenoble and [University of California] Davis and other [places]. Most of my kids were college shoppers. Dana went to several and ended up getting her degree here. She came back and finished up at Sac State. She got her teaching credential, and has taught, and will again after the children are a little older. [Interruption] I'm sorry, Don.

SENEY: That's all right.

NICHOLS: Matthew pursued the scholarship route very vigorously. When he was in high school, he was a member of every club and every organization, and thus was successful in garnering UCLA alumni scholarships. So his four years at UCLA, or five years, were paid for entirely by scholarships. I've always insisted that he's the child of mine that made me the most money because his

NICHOLS: scholarships would have required my earning an additional forty grand, or more than that, that I didn't have to because he got scholarships. He graduated cum laude with a degree, combined in African studies and psychology. Then he took a minor in Swahili. He worked as a fund raiser for the college of letters and sciences and for the alumni association while he was in school. Then he went off and did a year's field work in Africa on a Rotary Club scholarship and is now the director of fund raising for an organization called The New El Salvador Today Project in San Francisco. And is going to be going back, probably to Berkeley, for his Ph.D. in developmental studies.

The last of our children, Hilary and Meredith, twins, just celebrated their twenty-sixth birthday last week. Meredith is finishing her degree at San Francisco, her Masters. She took her B.A. at Berkeley, the only one of our kids to do a degree in four years. She went to Berkeley and four years later had a cum laude degree in some special major which I don't understand. She finished a year of study at the Sorbonne in intercultural communication, and is finishing her degree and will then go back to

France and, I think, marry there and go on for the Ph.D., for a doctorate in France. Hilary and Meredith currently live together in a wonderful apartment in San Francisco. And Hilary finished her degree in creative writing at San Francisco State and works on the Focus Magazine, KQED's magazine, and does fashion photo design on the side. And like everybody else in San Francisco, she also schleps drinks in restaurants, and waits tables, and does all that other stuff that's necessary to live in the apartment that they live in in San Francisco. That's the five kids.

SENEY: All right. You went overseas as a foreign correspondent.

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: Where did you go? And when was that?

NICHOLS: Well, I was bored at NBC. And I told my boss, John Thompson, in '58 that I was bored. He said at lunch one day, "Oh, yes, well, I know. I can understand that. Why don't you go to Europe as a foreign correspondent? I can get you travel orders for the military. We'll fly you into Frankfurt. We'll split you off from the bureau here for six months and you can be a roving foreign correspondent. Was there anything else that you wanted?" I mean I don't know why. John

was in a good mood. He'd gotten a memo from the Department of Defense that there was some free travel if he had anybody who wanted to use it. So, we went to Europe.

SENEY: This is a connection with the Defense Department then to provide travel for . . .

NICHOLS: . . . In those days, yes. They were, they still are, I'm sure, currying favor with reporters; you know, [trying to] make a reporter happy. All it cost them was a seat that would otherwise have been empty on a flight to Europe. So I traveled over on a flight with a bunch of dependents who were joining their families in Europe. Liz and Laurie flew over at our expense, our own money not the Defense Department's. We picked up a car at Bremen and traveled for five months. And I really was fully free-lancing. NBC was still paying me. And I was working doing Monitor radio and occasionally filling in. I did a little work for the bureau in London, a little work in Rome. But mostly, I was just doing feature material for Monitor and another one of our feature radio programs. It was a great time, just, you know, to be able to travel and go wherever I wanted. I had the car and enough money to travel. You know, could pick up side money by interviewing

interesting people and NBC credentials got you in any place. I was in London. I had gone to Bob Abernathy and he'd gotten me passes to go to Parliament. We were going to sit in the writers' section to watch the House of Commons on the last time that Sir Winston Churchill was ever in the House of Commons. He was helped in and sat down in the front bench. And he was there about twenty minutes, mumbled loudly as he was quite deaf by that time, and said some fairly outlandish things which everybody could hear, and then left. It was just by sheer coincidence that it was the last time Sir Winston was ever in the Commons.

SENEY: When did you get your assignment to go to the Democratic convention?

NICHOLS: I had a background in politics, but when I went to work for NBC, I severed all official ties. I'd dropped out as a Democratic party worker, I mean out of the club movement and so on, because I figured I was sufficiently compromised for my [Laughter] past without exacerbating it. But, because I had lots of contacts in the party, it was very logical for NBC to have me use those contacts. So, I was the west coast political correspondent for the network. So when the

conventions were then announced--and I had done some work with the political coverage on the congressional [elections]--and then when the presidential [elections] came up in '60 and that whole process began, I was assigned very early to work with the team on facilities arrangements in L.A., because the Democrats were going to be meeting in L.A. And so I was part, in effect, on the convention and on the host committee.

SENEY: Let me stop you there to say, you mentioned they had assigned you this partially because of your contacts with people in the party. Tell me about that. Who was this? And what kind of contact?

NICHOLS: By that time, after the UCLA years, I had, of course, gotten to know Jesse Unruh. [Marvin] Marv Holen who was Jesse's right-hand man and had been his campaign manager in his first successful campaign, was my closest friend. And is today one of my closest [friends]. Through them I got to know Carmen Warshaw who was then the state party chairwoman in southern California. Carmen and Louie Warshaw were also, of course, major financial backers of the party. Through the Glenn Anderson connections, I had gotten to know Alan Cranston. So I also knew a good many people in the "liberal" wing of the party where I really

felt more comfortable anyway.

SENEY: How did you meet Jesse Unruh?

NICHOLS: Marv Holen, a fascinating guy who . . .

SENEY: . . . Who has been interviewed for this project .
. . .

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, yes. I look forward to reading it because he is a tremendously rich source. Marv had met Jesse at USC [University of Southern California]. Most of Marv's friends from the area in which he grew up in Los Angeles had gone to USC. Marv had flunked out of high school, sort of. So he wasn't about to go to college, but his friends were all at USC and it was through them that he met Jesse Unruh, and [for] Marv [it] was a great reformation in his life, a true Epiphany. He ended up going to City College and then enrolling in UCLA. We met in January of probably '48, my second semester at UCLA. It was through Marv then that I had met Jesse Unruh and through that all the connections with various people in the Kennedy camp, all came through those connections; and my connections, as I say, with the liberal wing had come through Glenn Anderson and Alan Cranston and the [Democratic] club movement in which I'd been very involved.

SENEY: Holen was involved in the club movement, himself.

NICHOLS: Holen was involved. . . . Actually not. Jesse and Marv and others had organized this thing called the California Democratic Guild. The Guild was presumably the wholly pragmatic substitute for a club movement. There was never, there was only one . . .

SENEY: . . . I guess what I mean to say is Mr. Holen, if I may interrupt, belonged to one of the Democratic clubs in the Beverly Hills-Wilshire area.

NICHOLS: . . . He may very well have. And it's not surprising that I don't know that because it would not have been the center of his politics. The center of his politics were not the club movement. He was a close friend of the Warshaws and of Jesse and of television's [People's Court] Judge [Joseph] Wopner when Joe was first involved in Democratic politics, working his way up towards what later became a judicial appointment which got us a great talk show host or whatever that is. But that whole crowd had its sort of anchor really in USC. Marv had come over to UCLA and I met Marv very early on. Marv sort of was the bridge between my UCLA world of campus politics and the USC world of a good deal more real world politics.

SENEY: Do you recall your first meeting with Jesse Unruh?

NICHOLS: Yes. The first time I met Jesse was at their apartment, Jesse and Virginia's apartment. I want to say on Alvarado [Street] . That probably isn't right, but in that neighborhood, at any rate, in the environs of USC. It was at a California Democratic Guild meeting, I think the first meeting, it may have been the second. Art Wexler was there, and, God, I could probably dredge up almost all the names of the people who were there that night. But there were probably eight or ten of us only sitting around. They were forming the Guild. The Guild was to be a kind of action arm. And I think probably the idea had been that there would be more clubs, that it really would grow as a kind of counterpoint to the CDC, California Democratic Council.

SENEY: Do you remember what year this was?

NICHOLS: Oh, Lord, let's see. It would have been 1949, maybe '50. I was a sophomore, maybe a junior at UCLA. Probably more likely a sophomore, probably my second year at UCLA. It would have been then Marv's second or third semester at UCLA.

SENEY: This is before Jesse Unruh ran first for the

[California] assembly; that came in '52, if I'm not mistaken.

NICHOLS: Well, if my memory serves me, he ran, as you know, first unsuccessfully. And he ran in the district that involved Westwood Village and lost to a guy for whom I worked in the campaign. First campaign that I worked in, I was working for a candidate running against Jesse.

SENEY: Who was that?

NICHOLS: I've forgotten his name. He was a terrible poseur. His claim to fame was that he was a photographer. The only model he ever took pictures of was his own wife and most of them were nude photographs. He really was sort of a borderline pornographer, I think. But he had been active in the club movement and somehow he had ended up running and getting the nomination, as I recall. Jesse's second campaign--and I think I am right on this; Marv Holen would be the expert here of those extant--I worked a little in Jesse's successful campaign, though not very much.

SENEY: That would have been in 1954.

NICHOLS: Let's see in '54, I would not have worked in the campaign because in '54, I was already at NBC, wasn't I? Let's see, yes, I was.

SENEY: If I'm not mistaken, Jesse Unruh ran three times and was elected the third time, finally, in 1954.

NICHOLS: Yes, OK. That's right. Of course, it is. The second campaign I did work in and it was the third campaign, I didn't because by the third campaign, I was already at NBC and was trying to maintain a non-activist profile.

SENEY: Can we go back to that first meeting in Jesse's apartment? Can you recall what your impression of him was?

NICHOLS: Yes, I was appalled. I'm a snob, I think. I was very fat when I was a youngster. I left that out the other day. But I went through my pre-teen years . . .

SENEY: You are quite thin now.

NICHOLS: Yes, I've lost the weight and the hair. Then even my hair was fat, in those years. I had like all people, I think, who have been fat, many people who have been and are no longer, a kind of "There but for the grace of God" attitude toward people who are overweight. Whether I excuse it that way or simply say that I'm an awful snob and that Jesse was a slob which he was. He dressed badly; he wore sandals, or no shoes. He hadn't washed his feet in months, dirty toenails, hair desperately needed washing. He was gross. His

NICHOLS: wife Virginia, who was also a very large woman though not really overweight, just huge, is a great woman in stature and bearing. Virginia and I hit it off immediately. Sometime during that first meeting at Jesse's apartment--and I have no idea what, I've tried in the past to recollect and so has Marv--I said something that impressed Jesse because at the end of that first meeting, Jesse and I were in the little sort of dining alcove and Jesse was quizzing me, was asking about my own political history. And Marv said later, "You really made an impression on Jesse." Well, Jesse made an impression on me which was not affirmative but apparently he was more tolerant of my intolerance. It was by the next meeting of the Guild, Jesse apparently told Marv in particular, "Make sure Lee is there." So we drove over, and I recall that vividly, because it was in a mixed neighborhood of mostly, by that time already, essentially black neighborhood. We got out of the car and I didn't lock the door. And we were heading toward the apartment and Marv said, "Lee, you should lock the door." And I said, "That's a racist comment." And Marv said, "Fuck, racist comments. Go lock the car."

[Laughter] I don't know what that proves except

NICHOLS: that I was trying to be a white liberal at the time, I think. [Laughter] I figured locking a door was some act of racism.

The second meeting went very well and by the second meeting, I had overcome my prejudice at Jesse's physical appearance. And perhaps he was wearing shoes, and maybe he'd even had a bath, I don't know. Because at any rate, I remember from that second meeting developing a great, genuine fondness for him, and a fascination with the way his mind worked. And, of course, he was a brilliant raconteur. And I loved listening to the stories, to his ability to use a kind of Lincolnesque metaphor to arrive at a point. You know, in that sense I suppose it was like listening to my father because like my father he was a man who achieved his point through allegory and parable and [was a] rich, rich speaker. So I developed a real fondness [for him]. Though I would say that throughout the relationship, in all the years, I was always much closer to Virginia than I was to Jesse. The last time I saw her was at Jesse's funeral and it was a powerful moment. We didn't have to rekindle our years of friendship. They were there as powerfully as they had been when we saw each

other every day.

I was certainly never that close to Jesse. But then I'm not sure that any human being was ever that close to Jesse. So I may know him as well as anybody; no, I don't think I do. Marv Holen and others spent many more social hours with him and probably knew Jesse a great deal better than I did.

SENEY: What were your contacts with Cranston at this point? How did you know him?

NICHOLS: Well, I knew Alan through the club movement, through the CDC, and had known him when I was an activist as a club member and club president, and went to CDC conventions. When I was then named to the position with NBC, getting to know me was suddenly important. No longer was I, you know, a member of the club. Now I was part of the PR [public relations] system that they needed. So people who had perhaps never known my name before, I was the kid from Hawthorne, that friend of Glenn Anderson's, now I had identity and a microphone and a press pass. And it's wonderful how many friends you have; it's kind of like winning the lottery. You suddenly discover how many friends you have. So I was courted--by Republicans as well--but particularly by some of

the Democrats who saw in me a way of communicating. That happens to every reporter whether you carry a pad and a pencil or a microphone and a camera, it doesn't make any difference. Then my associations with Cranston and with campaigns, with all the candidates, got to be a daily affair. If there was a political story happening in San Francisco--I really was NBC's political person--I would come to San Francisco for Republican meetings and I would be in L.A. for Democratic meetings and vice versa. I was in Bakersfield or Fresno for a CDC convention, and at every Republican state committee meeting, every Democratic state convention during those years '58, '59 and into the beginning of '60.

SENEY: Now, let's talk about the 1960 convention, unless you want to say any more about the kind of contacts you had in these early days that might be important for people to understand your background in politics.

NICHOLS: Well, the only thing I suppose that is important is that I obviously was fascinated by politics. It was my religion, in a sense. I believe passionately in the process. I was my father's son and therefore believed that the way democracy

works is for everybody to be terribly involved and terribly concerned. If Dad had ever thought that an election went by and any member of his family hadn't voted in it, it would have just crushed him. Even when my grandmother was too ill to get out of the house, her absentee ballot arrived and then grandmother and I sat and we discussed it and filled out her absentee ballot. And she said, "I don't know why I have to do this. If it weren't for your father, I wouldn't have to do this." But she understood that in that family, with that son, and then with that grandson, you damn well participated. So that powerful emotional motivation coupled with the fact that I had spent an awful large hunk of my free time, and politics being my chief avocation--sometimes my vocation--I had rich contacts. Those contacts then found me a rich contact. And I was--I think I am repeating myself--I was just connected, and [with] the Republican party too. I certainly, I'm sure, was obviously labeled a partisan Democrat, but began to work with guys like [Sanford] Sandy Quinn, with others who were involved in various [Congressman Richard M.] Nixon campaigns with Maury Chotner . . .

SENEY: Who's Sandy Quinn? . . .

NICHOLS: If I had the name right. . . . And I think I do, Sandy Quinn was an "apparachnik" for the Republican party. Sandy was one of the men who was at the cabin, the great gay sex scandal, and Sandy was sort of drummed out of the party. But Sandy had been an advance man for the Nixon campaign, was the on the [Governor Ronald] Reagan staff at the time of that whole story . . .

SENEY: . . . Was this Mr. [Phil] Battaglia's . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Battaglia and Jack Kemp's cabin, yes . . .

SENEY: Let's talk about that later.

NICHOLS: OK.

SENEY: I was at the 1960 Democratic convention, and got to see one side of the convention, but I'm very interested in having you tell us about how a network prepared itself to cover that convention.

NICHOLS: Well, of course, that convention in terms of network news turned out to be crucially important because that was the year that there was this internal battle going on in the network at NBC. Chet Huntley had left L.A., in fact in some senses, as I said before, I sort of replaced him. I mean there was at least a budget and that was one of the reasons that they had money to hire me. Huntley had gone to New York; David Brinkley was being groomed for stardom out of the

NICHOLS: Washington, D.C. bureau. And the network didn't have a [Walter] Cronkite. It had an articulate young David Brinkley with his Virginia, or West Virginia, accent and it had the ever-so-elegant westerner in Chet Huntley. The solution to their having no one person strong enough to do it was to team up Huntley and Brinkley for that convention and create for the first time the whole notion of co-anchor in broadcast news, which had not happened before. That was the first convention, as I recall--I think I have my history right--was the first time that that had happened. Where there had been that dual host. In fact, half way through that convention, again if I remember correctly, Cronkite suddenly found himself teamed with a floorman, and I think it was Dan Rather, to give him a co-anchor, to sort of match the Huntley-Brinkley team. I think as I recall that Cronkite was most annoyed at having to share his throne with somebody else. But, of course, months of planning went into arrangements. I'm not familiar with what the preplanning was in Chicago, but the preplanning in L.A. involved lots of facilities' examination and exploration and, of course, interminable hours with the phone company making sure that all

lines were in and would work. We were working with . . .

SENEY: . . . This was still the day when technology was at a state when you had to broadcast your signal across the telephone lines.

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: No microwave.

NICHOLS: Yes. No.

SENEY: Or that sort of thing.

NICHOLS: No, we did have some limited transmissions because that was the first convention at which the creepy-peepy was invented, the portable television camera was used with limited success in the '60 convention. The new [Los Angeles] coliseum was a wonderful location because everything was on one floor. We had immediate access to the floor. The editorial and writing staffs surrounded the coliseum floor on all but the stage side. So access was wonderfully easy, unlike the problems at the [Chicago] stockyards or the problems at Cobo Hall in Detroit, or other places; Madison Square Garden was terrible. The press access was optimum. NBC's news bureau operation was very conveniently located. We had our radio booth right off the floor so that we could go from a story on the floor to broadcast.

NICHOLS: very quickly. Our television booth was, of course, high, as they are, where Huntley-Brinkley hung out.

It was, as you know having been there, it was a most exciting convention. I was, of course, also a Stevenson man though at that point being objective, hah. I was on the floor, happened to be at the site of the California delegation when Stevenson arrived at the convention hall, and was quite literally within inches of him, and reached out and touched as he walked by. I was close as we are sitting here. And it is an image which I know cameras have captured, but the fright, the absolute horror on his face as he was trying to make his way through this crowd, and I think perhaps in a truly, literal sense [he was] afraid for his life. Not that that crowd would have killed him, but perhaps in Stevenson's case that it was precisely crowds that would kill him. And somehow that mob of conventioners cheering, pressing close to him, sort of symbolic perhaps of Stevenson's whole attitude toward the nature of politics, from which he would certainly much preferred to have remained a good deal more aloof than that convention allowed him.

SENEY: Do you think he was put off by the kind emotion he provoked?

NICHOLS: Oh, I think he was devastated by it. The day before Stevenson's appearance, I had a wonderful long interview with Elizabeth Stevenson Ives, Adlai Stevenson's sister. She would have been the first lady [if he had been elected president] given the fact that he had no wife at that time. Elizabeth Stevenson Ives was one of the grandest women I have ever known in my life and I saw her after there had been an official press conference. She was leaving the Biltmore [Hotel] looking quite frail and ill. Not as a reporter but just as a concerned human being, I guess, I went over and asked if there was something I could do. And she wanted to know if I knew where she could get a cup of tea. So I ended up taking her into the coffee shop at the Biltmore Hotel and ordered her tea. My cameraman, Dexter Alley, happened to be having a sandwich at the table near by and he had his camera with him. I asked Mrs. Ives if she would permit this lunch conversation to be recorded. And she said "certainly." So Dexter moved the couple that was sitting in the booth behind us and peeked over my shoulder and got the most important interview, I

think, that was ever done with her. Not that I am the best interviewer, but it was in a moment of vulnerability for her. I had been gracious, not to get a story, but initially just had been gracious in her light. And so she was perfectly willing to be terribly open, terribly candid with me and . . .

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

NICHOLS: As I was saying, we were doing this interview with Elizabeth Stevenson Ives and the lead story, the legitimate lead story, was, as I recall, the [Lyndon] Johnsons' arrival in Los Angeles that day for the convention. But NBC lead with, billboarded him, and led with the interview with . . .

SENEY: . . . What does it mean when you say billboarded?

NICHOLS: Prior to the actual opening of the newscast the headline, the tease, "NBC exclusive interview with Elizabeth Stevenson Ives. Will she be America's next first lady? Film at eleven." In this case, earlier than eleven. I don't know why I diverted into that story except that . . .

SENEY: . . . No, that's all right, I was just curious. What was that you felt was important about that interview?

NICHOLS: Well, she talked about her brother, about Adlai. She talked about the accidental killing of his cousin and the terrible impact that she believed that that had had on Adlai.

SENEY: He accidentally killed his cousin?

NICHOLS: Yes, they were playing with a gun. The gun went off and Stevenson was holding the gun and his cousin was killed. It was, obviously as such a thing would be, a life-altering tragedy for Adlai Stevenson. She talked about that. She talked about his marriage and about what a disaster it had been, and how devoted and loyal he had tried to be to his wife and how unsuccessful that had been, though she didn't really blame Adlai's wife. She clearly pictured her as something of more than your average run-of-the-mill kook, a woman who sounded like if she hadn't been rich, she would have been a bag lady. She talked about Stevenson's aloofness; she talked about his patrician manner; she talked about his fear of crowds. It was really just extraordinarily candid. It was not a political interview. I mean, this was what we would now think of as a PBS [Public Broadcasting System] biography that she was delivering two days before the convention. [Laughter] I was very lucky to get

NICHOLS: that interview.

At the time the convention opened, I was a kind of handyman, facilities negotiator and sometimes reporter, though less reporting than the other during the preparations for the convention. [When] the convention opened, I was essentially assigned to radio. My primary duty was to handle the hourly newscasts, not all of them, of course, but to be available on a rotating schedule to do the NBC "hourlys" which produced, what is for me, the funniest event of the convention. I had gone into the men's room. The convention was droning on and it was clear that they were going to be continuing to hear nomination speeches. We knew that we wouldn't be doing the next hourly because the network would be sticking with the live action from the floor. So I was at liberty. I could wander around and do anything I wanted to. One of things I needed to do was go to the bathroom, so I went into the men's room and took the urinal next to Chester Bowles, then senator from Connecticut, and a name mentioned frequently as a vice presidential possibility, mentioned frequently, I think, by Chester Bowles because a Kennedy-Bowles ticket would have made no sense. But I had met him

NICHOLS: before and we were standing there gossiping as sometimes men do in the bathroom and . . .

[Interruption]

. . . I'm sorry. And so I started up a conversation with Chester Bowles, just sort of gossiping about what was going on. And I said, "What's the current gossip on the vice presidential nod?" And Chester Bowles answered my question and his answer to my question was the hottest news story of the hour. I dashed back from the urinal to the NBC space which was fortunately quite close. As I was rushing into the newsroom at about five minutes to 10 P.M., the news director announced that we were going to cut away from the network and I would be doing the upcoming hourly live, in like five minutes. Well, I didn't have a newscast written so I "ripped" copy. I handwrote my lead because I had this exclusive scoop. I got into the broadcast booth just as--Oh, God, I wish I could remember his name--read the Johnson Wax commercial, for Fibber McGee and Molly, famous old radio name--at any rate, he was just doing the Midas Muffler commercial and he said, "For fine mufflers, Midas and for great news, Lee Nichols-NBC." I slipped into my seat. The engineer gave me the cue and I

said, "Chester Bowles, Chester Bowles-- Connecticut senators. Chester Bowles. Senator [John F.] Kennedy. Chester Bowles tells me Kennedy senators. Kennedy senator's brother [Edward M.] Teddy. Symingstewarting. Symingstewarton. Kennedy senators. Chester Bowles says that Kennedy senators Ted. And now for a word from Midas Muffler."

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: Fortunately, the story I had just gotten from Chester Bowles, which was that [Edward M.] Ted Kennedy had told him personally that [John F.] Jack Kennedy intended to tap Stewart Symington, the Senator from Missouri, as his running mate, was false. Thank God, the story got killed before I came back to do the rest of the newscast. So . . .

SENEY: Your fit of stuttering was very helpful.

NICHOLS: Saved me [Laughter] from having just reported a whole fiasco . . .[Laughter] . . . In fact, that very night Stewart Symington's son [James] Jim and some others of us had gone out to a folk music club, and by this time the rumor had already been squelched. So I told Jimmy Symington about the fact that I had just about nominated his father for vice president. He

tells me that the story was, in fact, true briefly, that it had been much more than a simple trial balloon. It had, however, been part of the ploy to get Johnson to say yes. Missouri wasn't quite far enough south; it wasn't quite western or southern enough to suit the Kennedy campaign need, but Symington would have been the best fallback had the vice presidential request not gone to Johnson.

SENEY: Did you cover any of the Johnson-Kennedy conflict in the convention? Because that was the major conflict.

NICHOLS: Yes, I had a number of friends in the Kennedy camp so I had easy access to the . . .

SENEY: . . . Including Jesse Unruh . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Including Jesse, but by that time, also a lot of staff people I'd gotten to know. So I didn't have problems of entree to the Kennedy trailer at the campaign or to the suite. I did have, as everybody did, much more difficulty in getting into the Johnson campaign. I didn't know any of the Johnson people; they were infamous for this throughout his administration, paranoid as hell. The assumption among the Johnson staffers was that if the press got close to Johnson, they wouldn't like him, so they tried to keep the

press away from Johnson. I don't think Lyndon Johnson was nearly the ogre that his own staff seemed to think he would be. But on the other hand, I don't know. Maybe he had a terrible temper and maybe he did blow up at reporters and say profane things or whatever, not in my experience, but others certainly have more than I do. So I didn't have much involvement. So what I knew of the Johnson-Kennedy battle, I really knew only from the Kennedy side. And the Kennedys were, of course, obscenely scornful of this manipulative, sort of political monster, this atavistic creature from Texas whom they wanted on the ticket because of the demographics. They also wanted him on the ticket to keep him quiet. And the best place for Lyndon Johnson was the vice presidency which is where nobody can do anything, as Victor Moore made clear in "Louisiana Purchase," if I remember that film correctly. The scorn the Kennedy staffers heaped on Johnson was really [obvious]. I can understand the Johnson people's loathing of the Kennedy people; they had reason enough in the kind of things that the Kennedy staffers said of Johnson.

SENEY: Let me ask you about the conflict between the

networks covering the convention. There must be some wonderful stories of conflict between NBC, ABC, CBS, the wire services. Are there or is it just my imagination?

NICHOLS: No, there is. A convention is a slightly different situation because while you try, as I did, to have the hot, fresh story, the fact is that a convention, no matter how diligently one digs for the background, the story isn't in the background. The story is in what actually happens. And though as a reporter I needed to know as many rumors as I could possibly acquire, most of those rumors were really only good for preparing me for an interview. They were not in themselves worthy of retelling. The Stewart Symington as vice presidential nominee was a prime example. Knowing that, however, I certainly was in a better position then to interview Kennedy staffers and interview the Johnson people. You know, "Had you heard that Ted Kennedy says it's going to be Stewart Symington?" That got a great rise out of the Johnson staff. In fact, I think maybe I told them. I'm not sure whether I told them the first time. At least, the guy I told hadn't heard it before so I got a rise out of him.

NICHOLS: The competition that goes on at the network level doesn't really involve a person like me, a floor reporter or roving reporter attached to the California delegation. I was expected to know what was going on in the California delegation. I was expected to know what my sources within the Kennedy camp particularly had to say. But the competition, the brutal competition, of course, goes on up there in that booth when Huntley-Brinkley better have the story as fast as Cronkite has it. And if Cronkite's got a story, somebody up there producing the Huntley-Brinkley coverage is going to make damn sure that their floorman is on that story fast. So you cover each other's stories more than you cover the convention.

 And that's true of any such major event. We used to say at NBC that we were never competing with CBS or ABC; we were competing with The New York Times because all of the NBC executives rode in from Connecticut on the train and they read The New York Times. And then they got to the office and then they complained about last night's newscast if last night's newscast wasn't exactly the same as this morning's New York Times. We would sometimes try to explain to them

NICHOLS: that we did the story last night and the Times did their headline, their front page this morning, but that never worked. We competed for lead stories with The New York Times because that was the only thing our bosses knew about what was going on in the world, illiterate bunch of bastards that they mostly were. [Laughter] They also didn't think it made any sense to really spend any money on a newscast on Wednesday because doesn't everybody take Wednesday off to play polo. I think that was the apocryphal line but it is Rueven Frank who said it.

So I wasn't really involved in network competition that happens up there, that happens up at the broadcast booth, and it happens with the producer of the broadcast. My job was to feed information to those people. And I didn't really worry about getting the story first. I never did as a reporter. Given the kind of news that I mostly covered, I really, I guess this is pure ego, but I thought I probably had a better background than most of the men that I might be competing against. So I had an edge. And that edge was twenty years of preparation in politics. There weren't many names mentioned that I didn't know. In whatever state it was, I mean I

followed politics. I knew the two parties, how they functioned. I had in that sense a real edge, so I didn't feel much need to get it first. Forgive me, this is really egotistical as hell, but I thought I could probably get it right. Fortunately, Rueven Frank and others for whom I worked at NBC had begun to rely on me for accuracy not speed. I wasn't expected to run. I was expected to know what happened. No human being could ever have a better boss than Rueven Frank, president of NBC news. He was a brilliant, brilliant mind. And as the story the other day suggested, just the perfect boss, giving constant support.

SENEY: Let me ask you about the California delegation because [Governor Edmund G.] Pat Brown headed that delegation . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . And a very big disappointment for him and it eroded his power, did it not?

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes very severely. Pat Brown is a man, as we said before, who needs desperately to be liked. Which is why Pat Brown frequently was nicer to enemies than he was to his friends because he was always wooing enemies. Of course, he always had enemies because he had

NICHOLS: that ex-friend out there that he hadn't done a favor for. I heard him give away an appointment to the Board of Regents three times in one day to three successive people who came into the office. And I finally said it after he just made the appointment for the third time, I said, "Governor, I think he believes that you are going to appoint him to the Board of Regents." Now this was when old [Alfred] Al Heller of Wells Fargo Bank who had been on the Board of Regents was fatally ill, terminally ill. And I knew that Pat Brown was going to name his widow Eleanor Heller to the Board of Regents. I mean I knew that and Pat Brown had said that and I knew he told her that. Now he'd just given it to three other people. Pat's response was "Oh, they know Ellie's going to get the first one of those appointments." Well, no, Pat, they didn't know that. "You want an appointment to the Board of Regents? Next one I've got that's free, right." Well, he meant that. But it wasn't that the next three weren't going to be free [Laughter] because he already had those committed to the last three guys who had been in the office. I have profound respect for Pat; I am very, very, very fond of him, but he has a great need to be liked, more I

think than some others in politics. I don't think he had any notion that his support for Stevenson, that his favorite son candidacy, which at that time, as you know, was very common. Many states did it; they ran their governors as favorite sons in order to enhance the power of that delegation.

SENEY: I want to stop you here for a moment. As I recall from my reading, Pat Brown said to Kennedy, Johnson, the others--not Stevenson because he wasn't in it, but to people who were representing him, or reported representing--stay out of California . . .

NICHOLS: . . . That's right . . .

SENEY: . . . I'll run as a favorite son and I'll make sure that some of your supporters are on the delegation.

NICHOLS: True, true. In those days, halcyon days of politics . . .

SENEY: . . . What does that mean?

NICHOLS: Well, glory, beautiful, fresh. Forgive me, but I think there was a great deal more to democracy in the days of that kind of power brokering than there has been subsequently. I don't mean that I think that smoke filled rooms are the way to do politics, but I think if politics is the art of

NICHOLS: compromise, perhaps even the science of compromise, then the kind of thing that Pat Brown was trying to do and the way politics was done in the sixties and the early seventies made sense. It made more sense than sending hundreds of special interest delegates to the convention who were not empowered to compromise, were not empowered to find a solution or to achieve resolution. They were only empowered to speak for the NRA [National Rifle Association] or for Pro-Choice or for civil rights. I have obviously a strong problem with single issue politics. At any rate, Pat's position was, it struck me then and still today, perfectly honorable. He was in a position to play the role of power broker. Now playing that role, of course, also had a California political implication. It prevented the Unruh forces, his chief opponent within the Democratic party power structure, from capturing California for Kennedy. I think Pat probably assumed that if there had been the open contest in California, it might have been a toss-up between Stevenson--had he been out and been campaigning he could probably still have taken California that year, might have been able to--but Kennedy was the best organized campaign and

NICHOLS: certainly with the Unruh power behind him there was every reason to believe that Kennedy--had it been the kind of contest that we have these days--Kennedy would have had California in his pocket. So Pat's power brokering had as its chief loser in that battle, Jesse; it diminished his capacity, his power, his juice. The Kennedy people therefore were perfectly happy to see Brown made a fool of, the Johnson people had no reason to care for Pat at all, since Pat was a Stevenson supporter and that was an anathema to the Johnson camp. There was toward the end of that convention, of course, no Stevenson campaign left. Stevenson himself came to the convention floor, and removed his name in one of the most dramatic moments in American political history, I think, certainly of anything I've been privileged to see.

There was Pat being nominated for president of the United States in a way which everyone understood to be symbolic, and the vast majority of the people in the convention hall, delegates and certainly the audience in the tiers, had their favorite candidates. And their favorite candidate was not Pat Brown. So the jeering began at his nomination. I know that some have

NICHOLS: suggested that it was specifically orchestrated, that people were paid to jeer. I don't think it was necessary. I think that's perfectly understandable. We don't want you, Pat. We want Lyndon Johnson. Or we want Jack Kennedy. We don't want some substitute fat governor with all the legacy that he had at that time, the negatives that had gone on.

[Interruption]

Perfectly understandable. Conventions as you know are filled with, maybe what, 5 percent of political sophisticates and 95 percent of people who truly are amateur. They get to conventions for all sorts of weird reasons and not because they've ever read the Federalist Papers; they are not required reading to get to be a delegate or an alternate at a convention. It is an unsophisticated but zealous crowd. To say to that unsophisticated but zealous crowd, "Look, folks, this isn't real. We just have to nominate him so that he can hold the place so that then he can make a deal which will help support your candidate." That can't be said. There's no way to communicate that complicated message. He was being nominated for president and that frustrated them and they jeered. And I was standing with

his daughter, Kathleen--now our state treasurer-- with [Mrs. Edmund G. Brown] Bernice too. That's right. Bernice handled it well. Kathleen was devastated. I mean that child was just racked with sobs.

SENEY: She was about fifteen or so.

NICHOLS: Don't know. But yes, a teenage girl going to McClatchy High School, as I recall. One of Pat Brown's famous fights. He got into a fight with her principal at McClatchy High. [Laughter] Oh, it's all that story that doesn't bear retelling, but it's kind of like [President] Harry Truman and the drama . . .

SENEY: . . . Tell us about it . . .

NICHOLS: . . . The music critic. Well, Pat had said something publicly about the fact that he thought students should take six solids or five solids, you know. And he was using his own daughter and he was talking about support for education, it was a good thing to say. He was saying we need to give more money to the schools so that they can hire more teachers because the kids aren't working hard enough, they're not getting enough opportunity. "Look, for example, at my daughter. She is only taking three solids and then gym and study hall." Well, the principal of the high

school decided that this was his opportunity to show what he thought of Pat Brown. So he insisted that Pat Brown was a horse's ass in a public statement, in a newspaper article. That if Pat had ever been to the high school, if he had any idea what his daughter was really studying, he would realize that she was carrying a full load. So he defended the high school and Pat then counter-blasted at him. And it was one of the silliest little exchanges. I think Harry Truman came out looking better in his fight with the music critic than . . .

SENEY: . . . Over his daughter's singing . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Over his daughter's singing than Pat did over his daughter's education. But as with Margaret Truman's response to her father, so Kathleen Brown's response to hers. She was devastated [by the sound of booing at the convention] as any child would be. That's my father you are laughing at.

SENEY: Now as I recall what happened was Brown eventually simply released the delegates . . .

NICHOLS: . . . He did . . .

SENEY: . . . To vote as they pleased. Approximately, half voted for Stevenson and half voted for Kennedy.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. I don't remember those votes, but, yes, that corresponds to my memory. I don't know what the division was.

SENEY: Am I right in understanding that in this business that Jesse Unruh was generally considered to be the victor.

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely. Sure, Jesse ended up getting two things actually. He not only got a substantial vote delivered to Jack Kennedy but he managed to produce the decline in the public reputation and image of Pat Brown. What everyone assumed, of course, was the disastrous final nail in Brown's coffin; as we know, that's not how it turned out.

SENEY: Let me raise something here about the election, the Presidential primary in 1960 when Brown ran as the favorite son. I'm sure you are aware of this, although its effect is easy enough to forget. Let me raise the specifics here. This was the 1960 election, in the primary when Brown was a favorite son candidate. Old-age-pension lobbyist, George McClain, ran against him to head the Democratic delegation and McClain pulled 600,000 votes in that election. Do you recall that?

NICHOLS: I'd forgotten that it was George McClain, though

that was certainly McClain's heyday.

SENEY: That must have been embarrassing and humiliating right up front.

NICHOLS: Yes, it was. It was devastating. I think somebody ought to spend a few moments doing a Brown-[Peter B.] Pete Wilson comparison. And certainly before Democrats start assuming Wilson's a one term governor, they damned well better take a look at the comparisons of Pat Brown and Pete Wilson. Everybody was mad at Pat. There wasn't a constituency that he could count on . . .

SENEY: . . . This was from '58 to '60, the first two years . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, yes. Outside of his personal staff, and some of those probably didn't count as loyalists, there weren't any Pat Brown supporters. There were people who were still with him because they didn't have a viable alternative. But there was no Pat Brown machine. There was no Pat Brown operation. His own personal staff in those first two years was an extraordinarily bright collection of eggheads who didn't know anything about politics. Forgive me, [Frederick G.] Fred Dutton, you think you do, but you certainly prove it in your active political

career. Fred Dutton story to come. Hale Champion, for God's sake, didn't know anything about politics except what a reporter learns in San Francisco. I mean he's a very bright man but he had no political background. Warren Christopher, for God's sake, was on Pat's staff at that time as special advisor. Warren Christopher's one of the brightest men in America. I wish we could name him Secretary of State permanently. I think he's a brilliant, brilliant human being and happily a good friend of mine, but he didn't know anything about politics. You know, old Frank [A.] Chambers, part of the old Brown legacy from San Francisco, was the only guy around the office who'd ever walked a precinct, who'd ever worked in politics. [Laughter] The rest of them were delightful intellectual amateurs. That first Brown administration--and we counted from the Kennedy nomination when the whole staff changed because all those people then left the Brown staff for the Kennedy campaign . . .

SENEY: . . . So there was a movement of Brown people into the Kennedy administration . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Fred Dutton went back and left the Brown administration. Fred Dutton was Brown's chief of

staff--executive secretary--he left to go back as cabinet secretary for Jack Kennedy. [Richard G.] Dick Tuck left to go back to take a position that Fred got him in the Department of Housing in Urban transportation . . .

SENEY: . . . You smile as you mention his name. I'm anxious when we get around to talking about . . .

NICHOLS: . . . I'm sure we've done a Tuck interview, haven't we already? Richard G. Tuck, the Puck of American politics.

SENEY: . . . I'm not sure there is an interview of him. There may not be, not in this series anyway. There may be in another series.

NICHOLS: Dick Tuck was Pat Brown's travel secretary. Everything you want to know about Dick Tuck you can get out of reading old Art Hoppe columns in the San Francisco Chronicle because Art Hoppe and Dick Tuck were close friends. As far as I know every one of the stories that Hoppe's ever told about Tuck was, in fact, true. When Richard Nixon was campaigning in Sacramento, Tuck went over to Joe Sun's department store in Sacramento and bought a railroad man's hat and somewhere managed to buy a railroad man's lantern. And when Nixon was on the back of the platform and about to make his speech to the small throng in

Sacramento, Tuck waved the lantern and yelled, "Pull it out." And the engineer did and Richard Nixon was hauled out from the rail yards because Tuck had started the train.

SENEY: [Laughter] What Tuck did I think later became-- because Nixon had done these things--to be called dirty tricks.

NICHOLS: Yes, of course, there were times when Richard Nixon himself insisted that he'd learned it all from Dick Tuck. There was an occasion a good many years later when Richard Nixon saw Tuck at some official event and he said, jowls--wattles--jostling, he said, "At least, I won't have to see you tonight." And so Tuck immediately tried to figure out what "tonight" was. And "tonight" was a \$10,000-a-plate dinner, some enormous sum, in some club in Miami or some private home, I think as a matter of fact. When Richard Nixon arrived at the dinner, he was greeted at the door by a man in livery who was, of course, Richard G. Tuck who had bought himself a job on the catering staff. [Laughter] You know, Tuck was the happiest thing to happen in politics in California. He still owes me \$87 for cleaning that I picked up for him the first day I met him. He said, "Oh, Lee, would you. . . . I've got this

cleaning. I've got to go up to Sacramento with the governor. Would you pick up my laundry and I'll pick it up when I get in L.A." So I picked up his laundry, and Tuck picked up his laundry from me. What he didn't ever do was to pay me for it. [Laughter]

SENEY: [Laughter] What's he doing now?

NICHOLS: I don't know. I've heard that he's not well. Yes, Tuck is probably in his mid-seventies by this time. And I did hear from . . .

[End of Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

SENEY: Tell me a little more about Dick Tuck because he is a person, a character in California politics and known for his mischievousness and certainly a nemesis of Mr. Nixon . . .

NICHOLS: Also a nemesis within the party because Tuck can not resist the great line. Tuck is the author of the line that most insulted Pat Brown. Tuck was not quoted but Tuck was the source of the quotation I think in Time Magazine at the time of the convention that Pat Brown "was a real tower of Jello." Tuck was the author of the line. We were referring earlier to the schism in the Brown personal staff. One of the first times that I saw Tuck in Sacramento after I'd begun to work in

NICHOLS: the governor's staff, he was walking around wearing a cowboy boot with pants tucked into it and on the other foot, he was wearing an oxford shoe, winged-tip, and he explained to everyone who asked--and everyone did--that he was hedging his bets because he figured it would either be Johnson or Kennedy. This was before the convention. It would either be Johnson or Kennedy and he didn't want to be the loser so he was wearing a Johnson cowboy boot on one side and a Bostonian cordovan wing-tip on the other. That's also typical because Tuck is a Falstaff. And Tuck must not be taken seriously even though his probes were the most serious and would cut to the heart of an issue as quickly as anything. He was telling anybody who wanted to look at him that the Brown personal staff was divided, that there wasn't a position, that it was everyone for himself, in that case, every man for himself. And that there were Kennedy people, and Stevenson people, and Johnson people. And they weren't interested in what Pat Brown was doing. They were just looking for their next job, their career move, their power move which was what, I think, turned out to be the case in that staff. I guess this suggests that I'm not a fan of Fred

Dutton's; I was not and am not.

SENEY: Why not?

NICHOLS: There's a story that Fred himself tells that I think is the perfect illustration of that. In preparation for Jack Kennedy's first cabinet meeting, Fred Dutton prepared an elaborate memorandum, explaining to the president the peculiar vulnerabilities of each of the people whom he had selected for his cabinet. And he went through the list talking about peccadillos of one man and another, and what they'd done. This isn't a [J. Edgar] Hoover-FBI dossier but it is a political chart that paints an X on each of the Achilles' heels, if we can maul that metaphor, of every one of the men on the cabinet. The president buzzed him prior to the cabinet meeting and said, "Fred, I have this memo." "Yes, Mr. President." "You and I seem to think differently about the process. Didn't I appoint all these people to my cabinet?" "Yes, Mr. President." "And can't I fire all these people? Can't I get any one of them off my cabinet?" "Yes, Mr. President." "Then I don't understand what this memo is about." Now that speaks fairly well of Kennedy; it's also a fairly accurate description of Fred Dutton. If there was an

insidious way to do it, that would have been Fred's natural approach. You know the word Machiavellian applies though it's a terrible expression because Machiavelli is much smarter than Machiavellians are. But it was a notion that you didn't go directly toward power, that you didn't act, you insinuated your position, that you manipulated. And I found that [to be the case] in his personal life and social life and our professional relationships, a characteristic of Fred, that he was a man who if he could tell the truth, would find a way to make it a lie, would make it a little less clear, a little less direct. And I don't like people like that. So I didn't like Fred Dutton.

SENEY: Before we get further into the Brown business, and, of course, in an interview like this, it is difficult . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, and I'm not helping much . . .

SENEY: . . . That's fine, that's fine. No problem. I want to talk about the Republican convention which you also covered . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . Have we said everything we need to say about the Democratic national convention?

NICHOLS: Yes, I think probably.

SENEY: All right. Good.

NICHOLS: Kennedy was nominated; he picked Johnson, the campaign started.

SENEY: The Republican convention followed in Chicago . .

NICHOLS: . . . And we had, of course, only a matter of days after the Democratic convention. We rested up a little bit and then our team headed for Chicago and the stockyards, which was where the convention was held. I was assigned to the California delegation. I flew back on the plane with the California delegation.

SENEY: Who headed that delegation?

NICHOLS: Richard Nixon. Am I right? I think so. Was he in fact the head of the delegation? No, it may not be true, it may some one of the old pols. [William F.] Bill Knowland was on the delegation and all that whole era of Republican leaders. The point is that covering the California delegation at the Republican convention was the worst assignment in Chicago because nothing was going to happen except that they were going to support Richard Nixon. So I had a non-story. Happily, the network understood that and said, "What would you like to do?" And I said, "I'd like to find out what's going on in the

NICHOLS: Rockefeller campaign." Because I had a friend who was attached to Nelson Rockefeller's personal staff. So I really got a bizarre assignment. I got to go watch the machinations of the Rockefeller people to try to get a feel for what the "liberal" side of the Republican party was trying to do.

I also got an opportunity to handle the sort of civil rights issue at the convention which--in fact, I just told the story in the last hour in my class--produced the most memorable, one of the most memorable, events in my life. The African-American political collection, predemonstration meeting, was being held at the African Methodist Episcopal Church south of the stockyards. And I had gone down to cover it. We had a camera car with a hole in the roof and the camera up on the roof. I felt like something out of Hogan's Heroes, I mean, driving around in this staff car with a hole in the roof. We went down to cover the meeting and it was first of all vastly larger than anyone expected. The church was packed and then there were thousands of people outside of the church. And they marched from the AME church probably two miles, I would guess, to the [Chicago] stockyards, singing--and it was the

NICHOLS: first time that I'd ever heard it done in this way--the "Aamen, aamen, amen, amen." Terribly moving, this patient, ever-so-civil demonstration. They got to the stockyards. They surrounded it, at least the doors on, whatever that would have been, I guess, the south side. And they pounded on the doors like Greeks at church on Easter. "Let us in. Let us in. Let us in." Like the Cristo, Cristo that the Greeks do at church. The Republicans, of course, only had one man that they possibly could send out. That was their liberal or their moderate, Senator Kenneth Keating. So Kenneth Keating was dispatched by the convention handlers to go out and meet with this "mob"--that's not my quote. that's somebody else's. Mob it certainly wasn't. Keating was met outside by A. Phillip Randolph, by Roy Wilkins, by Ralph Abernathy, by, I think, Martin Luther King, Jr. But I don't remember King from that particular group. But any rate, the leaders of the civil rights movement were surrounding, were standing in a circle with Kenneth Keating. My camera car was parked so they could get a shot down into this conversation. I then grabbed the microphone and literally on my hands and knees and with my

NICHOLS: elbows crawled through the crowd, under feet, and insinuated myself in the center of this conversation. As I stuck the microphone up to record this conversation, Roy Wilkins said, "Get that reporter out of here." A. Phillip Randolph reached out and put his hand on my head and said, "Let him stay. He is our voice, now." Not referring, of course, to the reporter but referring to the fact that if this meeting didn't get communicated, whatever Keating might have said were promises that could be denied. Suddenly, the negotiations between the Republican convention spokesperson and the civil rights movement were being recorded. Now I don't know how vital that was but in the mind, at least in the view of A. Phillip Randolph, it was a crucial thing that there be, what he later called, the megaphone. "Where's the megaphone?" he said at one point. I reached the microphone higher. [Laughter] Of course, it did make a difference because Keating did go back in, and I've forgotten now the specific issue. I guess it was a platform issue at that point, a civil rights platform issue that they were trying to negotiate. At any rate, there was a somewhat more moderate platform plank, as I recall, there

was at least some sense of victory there.

SENEY: If I may interject, the Republicans were between a rock and a hard place. They wanted to satisfy the black constituency but they wanted to make inroads into the south . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, yes. My, my, how like American politics has been ever since.

SENEY: As you say you were given the unenviable assignment of covering the California delegation at the Republican convention, quite a different delegation than the one at the Democratic convention. By this time Rockefeller had been in and out of the race and now was kind of back in again . . .

NICHOLS: . . . He was almost the Stevenson of Chicago . . .

SENEY: . . . And issued a set of principles, a kind of Magna Carta or something or other. Do you recall that controversy between Nixon and Rockefeller over this statement of Rockefeller principles?

NICHOLS: Yes, I wonder if again. . . . I don't mean to say that history repeats itself, which it does not, but it does sometimes stutter and sounds like it's repeating itself. The 1980 Republican convention in Detroit with the negotiation that almost happened between Ronald Reagan, [Henry]

NICHOLS: Kissinger, and [Gerald R.] Gerry Ford which was that whole Nixon-Rockefeller drama being replayed. It was really quite a similar cast of characters. The effort was, in the view of the Rockefeller team or the moderates or the liberals of the party, to save the Republican party from its rapid slide into neo-fascism, to use Rockefeller campaign staff conversations. And the way to do that finally was to insist that there be these protocols, that there be this document which Nixon would agree to. And these would be principles that would guide the campaign, that would guide the Republican party and that then Rockefeller was willing to get out of the way and let Nixon have the nomination. All he wanted was Nixon's promise that he would be a good boy in the future. Well, Nixon didn't need to, though there was a great deal of press and news coverage of the controversy. Richard Nixon had the votes. He didn't need Nelson Rockefeller's votes. Now he may have needed the votes of the public out there that might have been swayed, but as is so frequently the case-- you know, and perhaps history of the election may subsequently have shown that he needed Rockefeller's support much more than he thought

he did--but he certainly didn't need it to get nominated. In fact, it was clearly a negative. If he was going to appeal to the conservative support, to kowtow, to give in to the Rockefeller demands, would have weakened his position with his own principal base of support. It was a great story and I don't know what we would have written if it hadn't been for the Rockefeller efforts in that convention. But I think it was just, you know, Pyrrhic as hell, . . .

SENEY: . . . Well, Nixon did embrace the principles . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, he did embrace them, he did embrace them. But what I mean to say is what a Pyrrhic victory for Rockefeller because Nixon embraced them . . .

SENEY: . . . Very quickly. Almost too quickly, I think, one might say.

NICHOLS: Well, the story had about a three day life as I recall. The "Will he?, will he?, will he?" All these efforts of the good Republicans, the liberals, the moderates, by their title, good Republicans, to try and battle the old guard. If Nixon hadn't acted quickly, that might have indeed been a major convention event. And it might have happened on the floor and it might

have been highly divisive. I think Nixon did, as he usually did, the enormously smart political thing, which is to say, "Sure, I'll agree to that. I'll make that campaign promise." And I'll keep it the same way [President George H.W.] Bush keeps promises not to raise taxes. You know, read my lips, I'm lying. You know, and Richard Nixon had--I don't mean to distinguish him particularly from other such politicians--no compunction whatsoever about agreeing to those principles. You know, Good Lord, it's the United Nations charter--you know, promise humanity, good will, and fellowship. He promised not to be Tricky Dicky any more. Well.

SENEY: It was a pretty uneventful convention I take it.

NICHOLS: Yes. I don't know what people who are historians of the civil rights movement have to say about that, but from my personal involvement, that was a momentous occasion. Other than that it was a very, very boring convention. I got to meet [Edward R.] Ed Murrow. I think that was for me the other highlight of it. [Laughter]

SENEY: Why don't you comment on that meeting for us?

NICHOLS: Well, it's a wonderful moment. Murrow, as you know, is famous among reporters as the man who introduced Hebert Hoover, Hoover Herbert, Heber,

Hoover, trying to get President Herbert Hoover, [Laughter]--I can't do it--Herbert Hoover's name out correctly. You know, he went on to a most extraordinary career in broadcast news.

SENEY: An icon, really.

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. I was at the Republican convention upstairs on the floor walking toward, I think, a men's room again. Sounds like I did that a lot, but there wasn't much else to do at that convention. Anyway I was walking by the CBS booth and they had a glass window and you could watch what was going on inside. Murrow had just finished an interview of some sort as I went by. We'd never met but the two people whom he had been interviewing, one of them I knew very well and there was sort of a wave, a recognition. And I went to the men's room. As I came back out, Murrow and the two people, one of whose name I may think of in moment perhaps not, a California Republican, anyway. They were just leaving as I walked by and Murrow, who is a tall man, very Lincolnesque, by that time apparently had asked who was that and somebody had identified me. So as we went by, he said, "You're Nichols." And I stopped. He said, "I loved that newscast you did from L.A. The Symstewartington, Kentedededs, my

NICHOLS: lord, that was worse than my Herbert Hoover."

My only exchange [Laughter] with Murrow was enormously flattering because he had actually been monitoring NBC news that night or somebody had told him how badly I'd garbaged that story. So those are my highlights. Other than that it was a really quite boring convention.

Well, there's one other highlight which is on one of the quiet afternoons or evenings. I was up in the NBC booth or in our offices. And Rueven Frank who was the president of NBC news, asked me to meet with him. Unusual, I mean, we are in the middle of convention. This not normally a time that you'd expect to meet with the boss. Rueven informed me that Sander Vanocur, NBC-Chicago at that time and a former Californian from Modoc County, was being removed from the Chicago bureau and attached to the Kennedy campaign. He'd be the chief man on the Kennedy campaign. That was going to leave the Chicago bureau open and would I be willing to take over the Chicago bureau. The only promise would be that it would be during the period of the campaign, after which, if Kennedy lost, Vanocur would come back. If Kennedy won, Vanocur would go to the White House

for NBC. I initially said yes. The Chicago bureau covered the civil rights movement at that point, it was the point. So that meant I would have spent as much time in Nashville or Memphis or Selma as I would have spent in Chicago. I had a wife and small child, was . . .

SENEY: . . . This was a promotion? . . .

NICHOLS: . . . That is sort of the third or fourth most important position, was then most important position, and I would be going from a reporter-commentator in L.A. to acting bureau chief in Chicago. It was an enormous advance and an absolutely astronomical increase in salary.

SENEY: Do you remember what that was?

NICHOLS: No, I don't. But I think I was going from \$15,000 to \$75,000 to move from L.A. to Chicago, as I recall. It was, at least, not three figures. I loathed Chicago. I don't know why. It's not just the weather. I don't like the feel of the city. I don't care if it is the hog butcher to the world. Maybe I don't like hog butchers that much. I don't like the city. I don't like its feel, I don't like its night life. And I left this out. When I was at the Democratic convention, the convention headquarters were the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

NICHOLS: And that's also where I'd taken rooms because I was attached to that delegation. And one evening at the hotel Pat Brown had offered me a position on his staff. It was done as Pat often did as a kind of, "You must be tired of this business, why don't you come join my staff?" I thanked him. Stanley Mosk, attorney general and now supreme court justice of California, was standing there. Stanley, his wife, and, I think, their son, and when Pat walked away, Stanley said, "I'm sorry you turned that down." And I said, "I don't think it was a real offer." And Stanley said, "Yes, it was a real offer. Pat would like to have you on his press staff." Well, it went no further. So when I was in Chicago and Rueven asked me to take over the Chicago bureau, that night I called home and talked to my wife and told her that really we had some narrow choices. If I wanted to make it with the network and wanted to advance, I would have to take the Chicago job. I couldn't turn that down and expect that I would again be offered such a plum, but that I didn't want to go to Chicago. I didn't want the job. We could stay in L.A. and I could continue to work for the network as a producer-commentator probably forever, at least

until something bad happened. But the chances for major advancement certainly would be limited by my decision. Or we could take seriously the offer of the job in Sacramento. And she said, "In putting it third, I know you. It means that's what you want to do." And I said, "Yes, that is what I want to do. At this point I'd like to spend a couple of years working in politics, finding out what that's like rather than continuing to cover it from the outside." And she said, "What do you want me to do?" And I said, "Why don't you call Marv Holen and Marv can call Jesse. Jesse can check with the governor to see whether that was a serious offer. If it was, Marv or you can call me back and let me know." Well, the call I got back was, I think, directly from Hale Champion, offering me the position as radio-TV press secretary. So I flew from Chicago to Sacramento, met with the governor, agreed on salary and title and stuff. We shook hands on it. And I flew to L.A. and resigned from NBC.

SENEY: So this would have been August . . .

NICHOLS: . . . August 15, August 30 somewhere, mid to late August, I went to work . . .

SENEY: . . . Did you take a pay cut to do this?

NICHOLS: No, actually it wasn't much. Everybody thought

it was. [John F.] Jack Burby and I were both paid \$15,000. I was making a little more than that with NBC. But I was taking a pay cut from the seventy-five grand that I might have made in Chicago. But I wasn't taking any pay cut, and certainly not in the light of the fact that we were going to be leaving Los Angeles and moving to Sacramento. We lived in a duplex in L.A. which we sold eventually for, I think, \$100,000 and bought a house in Sacramento for \$19,850. The kids walked to school until they were finished with their first two years of college. You know, this is an easy town to live in. It was an inexpensive town to live in. So our living standard went up though our salary hadn't changed, my salary hadn't changed much.

SENEY: Do you recall that conversation with Pat Brown when you were hired?

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: What was that like?

NICHOLS: Well, first of all, Pat thought I worked for CBS. He had forgotten what the network was but he . . .

SENEY: . . . That's not uncommon for him.

NICHOLS: No, not uncommon at all. He frequently forgot my name. He would call me Alex Nichols or he'd call

NICHOLS: Alex, Lee Pope. Alex Pope and Lee Nichols, he frequently got our names mixed up. And sometimes he'd ring the wrong one. I'd want to talk to his legislative secretary, Alexander Pope, and instead he would buzz me and say, "Could you come in here?" So I'd rush in the office and he'd say, "What are you doing in here?" "You wanted to see me." "No, I didn't. I wanted to see Alex." "OK" "I wanted to see the legislative one." "OK, Governor, I'll go shoo the [Laughter] legislative one in. I'm the mouthpiece one. I'm not the legislative one." The governor was excited about, I think, the fact that he was going to have the first radio-television press secretary in the country. Nobody had named one before and he was sort of tickled with the idea that he got to be the first one. I think he liked me. I think he liked me sort of from the outset. You know, he knew my work. He certainly watched me cover stories. And I did interview him a good many times. I think he trusted me. I don't think my involvements with Unruh in the past, which I'm sure, he knew, of course, bothered him at all. He didn't and doesn't think in conspiratorial terms. The idea that I was being planted on his staff by Unruh, if he'd

been told that, as he later was, he wouldn't have believed. It doesn't make any sense. That's too conspiratorial. That's too Machiavellian. People don't really do that. It was a warm greeting. Good session. He asked if I was free to go back to L.A. for a few days because he was going to be in the LA office and he had some interviews to do. And I flew back to L.A. Then he came down the next day and the day after that, we were up at Steve Allen's house filming a water bond commercial with . . .

SENEY: . . . Steve Allen, the entertainer?

NICHOLS: Steve Allen, the entertainer, and Joyce Meadows,¹ or whatever her name was, his wife . . .

SENEY: . . . Audrey Meadows.

NICHOLS: Audrey Meadows, one of those fields. And Mercedes McCambridge. This was fun now. You know, now I can actually play politics. And I can play it with these famous show business [people]. . . . I had a great time.

SENEY: I want to go back a minute to the initial interview. What did he tell you that he wanted you to do? Was he specific about what he had in mind?

¹Jayne Meadows, entertainer and wife of Steve Allen.

NICHOLS: What I remember most is that he asked me, I don't think he told me at all, he said, "What do you think you can do?" And I said, "Well, there are some things that I do want to talk to you about. One is that there are some words that I think you should avoid using." The example was he referred to the collective humanity as "human beans." And I said, "You know, people laugh. I'm sorry, Governor, but people laugh when you say human beans." And he said, "What's the matter with that?" And I said, "That's not how it's pronounced. It's be-ings. And you don't say human beings. And I don't think you have to learn to say human beings, I think you ought to learn to say people because people is a better word. It works fine and there are things like that that I'd like to work with you on. Some things about your presentation, some things, in fact, about wardrobe and then about providing answers to the questions you are asked, rather than answering questions that you wished the reporter had asked. If you are going to do that, then you've got to find a way to. . . ." And I laid out a whole, kind of instructional program. And he seemed very eager. I mean, he was. I got notes very frequently saying, "Come in. You

know, let's do this." He usually wasn't available when he called me in; he was doing something else, but he had a notion that I was to be his media handler. We didn't have TV media handlers much in those days . . .

SENEY: . . . He didn't have any problem with your suggestion about his use of different words?

NICHOLS: . . . No . . .

SENEY: . . . Or wardrobe, no ego to get past?

NICHOLS: No, I also said at that time, or perhaps later, something about that I would like at some point to go with him to the barber shop because I would like to discuss with his barber the way he wore his hair. That offended him, I think. At any rate, I had to go to his barber on my own and plead with his barber up at the Land Barber Shop on Tenth, or where ever it is, to stop using so much Brill Cream or lotion in his hair because he looked slicked down. He looked like a trout. And that if he could just get the governor to give up the grease, and let his hair get a little fuller, it would help. It would certainly help in his appearance on camera. It took us almost my entire term in the governor's office to get the governor's barber and the governor to agree on how much oil to put on his hair. Of course,

he still slicks it down.

SENEY: My understanding is that he would go to the barbershop and simply take his turn.

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Frequently, we'd go with him. Two or three times, at least, I'd walked up the street with the governor. Often after we'd had lunch at the Capitol Tamale, then he'd go to the barber shop. And we'd sit and he'd read a magazine.

SENEY: While his turn came up?

NICHOLS: Waiting for his turn, yes. And Pat doesn't do humility shticks. I mean, there wasn't a press corps covering him. There wasn't a report that the governor takes his turn. None of that would have occurred to him. Indeed, it would have offended him. It really would have offended him. Gee, is that common? Am I being a lower class person? Should I ask Bernice about this? Maybe I should do this some other way. Am I being crude?

SENEY: I always thought from my observation of him and reading about him that that was a very revealing and typical story of him, waiting in line for his haircut.

NICHOLS: Well, I haven't talked about this. Did I talk about the Foreign Affairs?

SENEY: Go ahead.

NICHOLS: The first night that we were back at Sacramento, I don't know what the reason was, but suddenly I was in the office late. The governor was in the office late, and he wandered by my office, and I was working. And he said, "What are you doing hanging around here?" And I said, "Well, my wife isn't here. I have nothing to go home to." He said, "My wife isn't here either. Come on home with me. Let's go have a drink." So we grabbed his briefcase, or he had it with him then I think, and went down stairs in the little elevator from his office. The driver took us to the mansion. Pat went on into the music room, that front room, and asked me to pour us drinks. "There's some good scotch and some Chivas," I think he said, "up on the shelf." So I went in the little butler's pantry and poured us each a pretty stiff drink as he suggested and carried it back. When I walked back in the room, Pat had been reading a magazine, as I walked in he put it down quickly. The magazine he was reading was Foreign Affairs Quarterly. Is that the right name?

SENEY: Yes.

NICHOLS: Gray cover, black print. And I said, because I

had once briefly subscribed to this as every psuedo-intellectual does briefly--it looks good on the coffee table--and I suppose I had done so . . . [But that was what Pat read to relax. He may not want me to say it, but Pat Brown's an intellectual.]¹

[End Tape 4, Side A]

¹Material in brackets added by Mr. Nichols.

[Session 3, November 19, 1991]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

SENEY: Last time when we finished we were talking about your job with Pat Brown, which you kind of described as what we would call today a media handler. We talked about your attempts to change his physical image a bit. What other things along those lines did you do besides talk to him about the way he might wear his hair?

NICHOLS: Well, Pat had, given the way he grew up in the Brown family in San Francisco, some unique pronunciations. I guess I haven't mentioned this but Pat referred to . . .

SENEY: . . . You did say human beings.

NICHOLS: Did I tell you the human beans story already? There were a number of those; I was thinking after the other day, afterwards, trying to dredge up some more of those specifics. I was really totally unsuccessful in adjusting Pat's language, but it was very easy to work with his speech writers. I did some of that myself but . . .

SENEY: Taking words like human beings out . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, we would just rewrite his speeches. So that once I'd identified a group of words that were either pronounced in a peculiar way or some of them were even hard to understand. . . . I mean, your ear didn't pick them up given his San Francisco Irish pronunciations. So I met with Pat--Lord, I've just lost her last name. She's the chief [speech] writer. Oh, heavens, at any rate, whenever I would hear one of them, I would go in. We maintained a little card in her office. We sort of indexed words she shouldn't use and accomplished most of what I wanted to do.

SENEY: . . . Let me stop there. We can add the name you have forgotten later. She, I take it, was amenable to this.

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. She and I had a particularly good relationship. And I think I did, in fact, I probably did with most the staff. She was perfectly amenable.

SENEY: I take it then that this was something that his staff broadly understood, that he needed a little polish, you might say, in this way.

NICHOLS: Well, yes, because in a very real sense, I suppose Pat was at the end of the generation of print politicians. In fact, my being on the staff was some evidence of the fact that he and

NICHOLS: others were recognizing that we had now entered a world of electronic campaigning, radio, of course, previously, but now particularly of television. And that if the governor didn't come across well on television, he was at a disadvantage. While I certainly wasn't the first of the media, or TV handlers, groomers, that was clearly one of the things that I was supposed to do, prepare him for the television era of politics. Something, of course, his son learned very well. I was never successful, the staff was never successful in getting Pat to think in terms of the sound bite, the quotable quotation that would be easy for TV editors to lift out of an interview or out of a press conference to use. And Pat tends to talk in very, very convoluted sentences. Intelligent. He knows where he is going and they're even possible to punctuate afterwards. Unlike [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower's. But he doesn't deliver a sound bite; he never did. And having seen an interview with him recently and watched the way it was cut up, he still doesn't. He doesn't think in sound bites. And he doesn't talk in sound bites.

SENEY: As you talk about his problems in this regard, I guess what comes to mind is former Mayor Richard [J.] Daley of Chicago.

NICHOLS: Well, yes. There is, of course, a whole world of American politicians. I suppose the only exception, from earlier times, the only exception was [President] Franklin [D] Roosevelt. But he had been educated in almost a British tradition where language and oral skills were highly rewarded. I think he went to Groton, as I recall. And that was an education that, of course, Pat didn't have. Lowell High [in San Francisco] did not put the same kind of emphasis on the extemporaneously elegant speech. But I wouldn't want any of that to suggest that I'm criticizing Pat's intelligence because I had and have great respect for his mind. I was always intrigued by the way he could incorporate the parable or the story, the illustration from some very concrete example of some case he had tried or some situation that he had been in. Frequently, those stories would go on at great length. I would certainly believe that he'd lost his train of thought. Then he would say, "Therefore," or "So as you see." Then that was suddenly perfectly clear, that he was, in fact,

using that story to illustrate his point. Really quite a facile mind, I think. And, of course, a man of incredible compassion.

SENEY: That gets me to something I want to ask you about. Perhaps this is not a fair question. Maybe this is one I should ask him rather than you, if I had the opportunity, I should say. Do you have any insight into his ambition to be governor and to be in politics? Why did he pursue for so many years, a political career?

NICHOLS: Because, and I don't mean to do pop-psych here, I think I could probably even remember Pat's story that would illustrate it rather than mine. Pat Brown was the son of a Irish cigar store owner in San Francisco. His intellectual ability had gotten him to Lowell High, to the elegant high school. He had married the brightest woman I'm sure he ever had met. Bernice Layne was, is, an enormously bright human being. Both because he believed that he'd grown up socially impoverished, there was always a great drive in Pat to make up for that. I think what makes Sammy run has its parallel in the Irish street kid who ran numbers for his dad's backroom gambling operation, if I remember that story correctly. There was therefore a lot to prove.

A lot to prove as an Irish-American in San Francisco of that era. And you can look at a lot of the things that Pat did, and I think closing down the whore houses in Jackson is probably the most famous story, when he was attorney general. And it wasn't, I think, that Pat was necessarily or that he would have considered himself to be, on a moral crusade against prostitution as such, but that it was one more way of proving that he didn't have a kind of Irish mafia mentality: a little gambling in the backroom is OK, a little prostitution is OK. I mean he's not Mayor Daley; he is not Carmine De Sapio. He has a very different view of morality and of his own responsibility, and this is nearly a quote--for making this a good place for his kids to grow up. And by "this" he meant the state of California. And prostitution in Jackson was not a good thing because his kids grew up in San Francisco and he didn't think there ought to be whore houses in Jackson.

SENEY: Can you remember the story that he would tell that would illustrate why he was in politics?

NICHOLS: I don't remember the individual involved though it was somebody famous in San Francisco politics at the time. But Pat has told the story more

NICHOLS: than once about the political figure coming into the cigar store. He came in to do whatever it was they did in the back room; whether that was race track betting, I'm not sure what it was, but it was some kind of illegal activity. Pat was embarrassed that this politician would be indulging in this kind of illegal activity. He should have been held to a higher standard. It was that higher standard and that man's having violated it that Pat perceived to be the nobility of the political calling. And Pat was embarrassed as a kid. That embarrassment, that sense of politics as a calling every bit as noble as the priesthood is, I think, the thing that drove him. I think it's the ambition to be a good man and to have others know that you are being a good man that drove him more than the usual sense of personal ambition. Maybe that is personal ambition, but it's the ambition to be good which is, if I remember the Kantian imperative, if we could will all of our politicians to have [Laughter] such a motivation. Pat's leadership in California, it seems to me, illuminates that again and again and again. When Pat would take political risks it was because it was right in his judgment. That was always more

important. Not that he wouldn't sometimes trim the edges, but that trying to do right was infinitely more important than his own reelection, the capital punishment thing being, of course, the prime example.

SENEY: Let me stop to ask you what you mean when you say sometimes he would trim edges. What do you mean by that?

NICHOLS: Well, he understood the art of compromise. He understood that his sense of what was right was subject to debate, and that the political exigencies on many occasions--capital punishment being again one of those examples--would not allow him to do what his morality drove him to do. So he would suffer and be tormented and then give up, certainly not give up his moral position, but give up his efforts to try and accomplish something that he was trying to do.

SENEY: Can you recall any instances when he compromised that are particularly memorable or perhaps you might have been critical of or thought were a wise thing to do?

NICHOLS: Oh, I think my answer's going to be, "No" because nothing leaps to mind at the moment. Though, of course, the biographies will talk about his torment over the issues of capital punishment and

over the execution of Caryl Chessman as a particularly tormenting time for the governor. A man who was, is, I'm sure, profoundly opposed to capital punishment and was driven to the point of . . .

SENEY: I think one thing people forget because of the notoriety of the Chessman case is that there were actually many executions while he was governor, more than thirty, I believe.

NICHOLS: Yes, I think so. I don't remember the number but it . . .

SENEY: . . . Yes, for which he had to sign death warrants. He recently, in the last couple of years, published a book¹ on this very subject.

NICHOLS: Has he? I didn't know.

SENEY: Yes, explaining his anguish at having to sign death warrants and the whole question of being a governor who presided over executions.

NICHOLS: It's interesting, and I don't know whether, even whether Cecil Poole is still alive, I haven't . . .

SENEY: He was his clemency secretary.

NICHOLS: Clemency secretary.

SENEY: Tell me about him.

¹Edmund G. Brown. Public Justice, Private Mercy. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, New York, 1989.

NICHOLS: Well, Cecil is a fascinating man. A man of extraordinary power, and I don't mean physical size and don't even mean persuasion. People would describe him as the coiled spring, the tiger ready to leap. There was that sense of power and of kind of a seething energy in Cecil Poole, undoubtedly attributable in some sense to discrimination he'd known as an African-American. And Pat relied on Cecil tremendously in these issues because, and I don't mean this in a way to suggest that I think Pat was racist, but that Pat could somehow position Cecil's being black between himself and the act of the execution. It was almost, in that sense Cecil almost functioned as a kind of father confessor, or confessor priest. That somehow in Pat's thinking, if Cecil thought that this execution was somehow justified, Pat found that easier to accept. Cecil was extremely important in providing him an exit from the maze of his own morality. And the governor, I can't give you a specific quotation, but the governor was not unaware of the fact that Cecil's experience with discrimination and his toughness played a part in that. Clearly what I mean by that is, race played a part in that. That's gotten very complicated. I know what I

think but I'm not sure that it will make any sense . . .

SENEY: . . . Let me ask you if were you ever in the room when Cecil Poole reported to the governor on a clemency question.

NICHOLS: . . . Yes.

SENEY: How did that work?

NICHOLS: These often came up at staff meetings; the various staff would report on whatever. And Cecil would usually report second or third and he would tell the governor what was coming up. And what was coming up, on a number of occasions, were executions. And the governor would listen and nod. What was most remarkable is that generally he didn't ask any questions, he didn't pursue it. I'm glad you asked it because that really illustrates the point I was trying to make; Cecil became the governor's conscience on these issues. And thus absolved the governor of having to deal with that moral struggle himself though we never doubted the governor's position on capital punishment.

SENEY: Did he pretty much follow Cecil Poole's recommendations?

NICHOLS: I think without exception. I don't know of an exception. Cecil frequently worried that the

governor would act, that there would be a stay, and that the governor would "go soft" on some case that had achieved notoriety.

SENEY: What was Cecil Poole's background that gave the governor confidence that he could make these kind of decisions?

NICHOLS: I wish I knew that. I certainly have known it in the past, but don't at the moment. I think he came out of the San Francisco district attorney's office and may, indeed, have worked for Pat in the [Attorney General] AG's office as well. But I'm not sure of that, I'm really not sure. And then, of course, he got the judicial appointment toward the end of that period and left the governor's office. But I don't know; I think that would be my answer to the question, is that the governor was able to avoid anguish in a sense by shifting responsibility to Cecil.

SENEY: Let me ask you about some of his other staff people as long as we are on the subject. Hale Champion was certainly one of best known and maybe best regarded, well let me not offer a conclusion . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Oh, I will disagree with you anyway . . .

SENEY: . . . [Laughter] I'm sure you would. But it's really not my place to offer a conclusion. Let

me ask you about Hale Champion and ask you to talk about him.

NICHOLS: Well, the phrase "overachiever" I've always scorned because I'm not sure that there's any definition to what an overachiever is. If you succeed, it seems to me you are an achiever. I would however make an exception to that in Hale's case because if there is a living definition of an overachiever it's Hale. I have never in my association with Hale ever observed the kind of intelligence for which he is famous. I don't know when he thinks or where he thinks because he certainly as a conversationalist doesn't reveal a particularly interesting mind or even a very quick mind. During those years--I've only had the one briefest contact with him afterwards--Hale and Marie and my wife and I were certainly good social friends. Hale, it seemed to me, in those years suffered the worst of the symptoms of that disease which so many journalists catch; acute cynicism, [the inability] to care deeply. So many print journalists--I'm sure radio-television as well--seem to consider it a violation of the canon of objectivity to reveal caring, to reveal emotion, to reveal deeply held principles. So that those who hold principles

NICHOLS: deeply are scorned, are laughed at, and laughed about. The cynic, "who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing," is the line that comes to mind. In the time that I was with the governor's staff and therefore seeing Hale on a daily basis, I never drew a conclusion about what it was that he believed in. I wasn't sure that he believed in the political process. I wasn't sure he believed in democracy. I wasn't sure that he believed in the governor as a legitimate leader. I wasn't sure that he understood, as I understood politics having been in it since childhood, the legitimacy of the process and the imperative of losing. The only reason that the political party survived is that they have learned how to lose. Hale Champion, I think, could have been a perfectly successful staff man to Richard Nixon and, I think, would not have seen anything particularly inappropriate about Nixon's effort to dress the White House police in those Swiss Guard uniforms for which he rightfully took criticism, which later I think were sold to a school band in Montana as I recall. The notion of the imperial presidency which scares so many of us, I'm not so sure that that would have scared Hale at all. He was in

those years, it seemed to me, a man who believed that the ends truly did justify the means and that those of us, those meaning least important of all, those who were caught up in the pettifoggery of procedure, policy, rules, and law were a kind of a dead weight. Can we get it done, not should we do it, or is it moral? Maybe that's not the position in which moral questions should be debated or ethical principles should be even brought into play. I thought they should. I didn't think Hale thought they should and I didn't respect him then and I don't, in fact, respect him much now.

SENEY: The governor, as I understand it, relied heavily on him.

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. As he had relied heavily on Fred Dutton. The governor, I'm sure, had unquestioned faith [in him].

SENEY: May I add here to this day speaks very highly of him?

NICHOLS: Sure, sure. As I'm sure George Bush speaks and will always speak highly of John Sununu, as I suppose Dwight Eisenhower spoke highly of Sherman Adams. I don't like Sununu. I didn't like Sherman Adams. And I'm not very fond of Hale

Champion. His wife is wonderful. Marie is great.

SENEY: I understand and perhaps you had some opportunity to observe this, that when he became finance director, his relationship with the legislature was very frosty, indeed.

NICHOLS: Yes. Hale had, I think quite properly, relied on others for legislative liaison, very heavily, as he should have, because you can have an attitude in the governor's office and inevitably this is going to be the case. You know, people around the governor's office are going to say some sarcastic and highly uncomplimentary things [about] the about folks upstairs. Democrats certainly took as much heat from the governor's staff . . .

SENEY: . . . When you say upstairs, you mean . . .

NICHOLS: . . . I mean the legislature, the senate and assembly chambers. The legislators with whom I was then or subsequently became close didn't trust Hale. Hale, however, had good legislative staff. Certainly in Alex Pope, Frank Mesple, who was extraordinarily good at maintaining truly affectionate relations with members of the legislature who trusted him. They trusted him to be absolutely candid, not to take himself too

NICHOLS: seriously, and to be running an errand, not a policy maker. Frank would argue persuasively a position as Alex Pope did, but because neither of those legislative secretaries took themselves seriously as policy makers, the legislators had very little difficulty in dealing with them in a candid way. That was a good idea.

Now when Hale became finance director, there were no such buffers. Then Hale was having to deal directly and, you know, one of the things, and it will always be the case, is that the legislature will believe that the director of finance is cooking the books. Whether that's Richard Darmon or Hale Champion, the phenomenon is the same. "I don't believe your numbers. There is more there we can spend. You've got a secret slush fund. You've got a kitty hidden, I know you, Hale. You've got" So the nature of the jobs, I think, produces the tension. And Hale didn't have anyone as effective as Pat Brown had had serving as the buffer between Hale and the legislators. The fact that Hale couldn't even balance his checkbook was immaterial. The usual jokes made about Hale at the time he was appointed, because

you don't have to balance your own checkbook to be director of finance. That's not the job.

SENEY: Was he an effective director?

NICHOLS: I think so. Yes, no, I think he was. Yes, I think he ran the department of finance more effectively as a kind of instrument of policy than predecessors and successors did.

SENEY: When we say effective, I suppose we mean carrying out the governor's will.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. And assuring that you didn't engage in the kind of fights which then lead to control language, that the legislature binds the governor's hands in specific ways of spending. No, I think Hale was an effective director. You know I don't think the director of finance can be liked by a legislature or probably should be. [It's] simply unhealthy if the legislature likes the director of finance. [Laughter]

SENEY: You mentioned Alex Pope and Frank Mesple. And I wonder if you would like to make any further comments about either of them. They were both, as I understand, highly regarded, especially Frank Mesple.

NICHOLS: You certainly hear more stories about Frank because Frank was a great storyteller, very bright man, I think educated in political

NICHOLS: science, and a man who adored the practice of the arts and crafts of politics. But mostly what added to his intelligence was this wonderful capacity as a storyteller and as a listener. He brought a kind of extraordinary Gallic charm to every interaction. I don't suppose there's a person, certainly that I've ever met, who did not adore Frank. When you were in his presence, you were totally in his presence. He was consumed by the conversation he was in. He did not look over his shoulder for the next more interesting person to talk to. When you're with Frank, you had Frank totally. And that's how he treated every legislator; [that's] terribly important. But it's also how he treated friends and casual acquaintances. I mean, I've seen him at a party talking to, at his house, my eldest daughter with the same kind of intense connection that he would have shown Jesse Unruh or [Senator] Hugh [M.] Burns, speaker pro tem at the time, or [Assemblyman Robert W.] Bob Crown. There was in him that capacity of being intensely interested and intensely interesting. And I say all that as foundation for saying Alex Pope, I think, was the more effective legislative secretary. Alex was, and is an enormously bright man who can carry

fifteen agendas simultaneously and can see the advantage of giving up on position four of agenda A because that will buy him approval on agenda Y that the other guy doesn't [know] if you're going to get to until next year. As the splendid chess player, he is aware of those moves well down the game. He's also more, more truly philosophical than Frank was. Perhaps, oddly enough, less the practical politician than Frank Mesple, who was the trained political scientist. [Laughter] Interesting man, liked Alex greatly.

SENEY: We've talked about Dick Tuck already and I want to ask you about a couple of other people. One is Paul Ward. What role did he play?

NICHOLS: Paul was the designer of the Brown legislative package. Let's see how to describe that. Paul was the, let's see, I think the word architect is the right word. Particularly in my first month or two on the governor's staff, he was the effective architect. If Alex was executing the plays, then Paul was the coach. Getting to know Paul Ward well, was not easy. Paul, as you know, had a very serious speech impediment. And it was difficult often to actually follow a sentence. Paul also drank considerably and that further influenced his speech. So there certainly were

conversations that I've had with Paul where I would sit for an hour and not have an idea in my head what it was that he was talking about. And then, of course, we'd run from the office to talk to somebody else to find out that I was not alone, they'd also had that same conversation and they also didn't know what it was that Paul was talking about. A man of enormous heart, tremendous compassion, and a very, very skillful architect, as skillful designer of . . .

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

SENEY: Since your talking about Paul Ward as the architect of Pat Brown's legislative policy, I want to ask you about something that [Congressman Thomas M.] Tom Rees the former [state] senator, and congressman said.¹ That is, he said that Governor Brown, I don't know if "stole" is the right word, maybe I should say "appropriated" some of the things that Jesse Unruh and Tom Rees had been trying to do in the legislature before the Democrats had their majority [before 1988]. And these were things like fair employment and

¹Thomas M. Rees, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1988 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.

equal housing, that those programs had really come out of the legislature. And I say this in terms of prefacing a question about the origins of Pat Brown's program. I take it he had no problem appropriating what he thought was useful and good.

NICHOLS: Well, I don't criticize Tom for saying that but for Tom to suggest that social movements have a single parent or even a single house in which they're conceived is to use the wrong metaphor. Social policy, social movements are climatic conditions. To use the metaphor of public policy or ideas like fair housing as having a parent in the legislature is to use the wrong metaphor. Changes in the political climate is the better metaphor which suggests that like weather, changes have causes which are truly global. The idea that fair housing or fair employment is born in Jesse Unruh in the back country of Texas, in a poor Mennonite family, or the origins of social policy in Tom Rees come from having been born to great wealth, having married great wealth, and having the kind of powerful noblesse oblige that Tom has, or for Pat Brown the need to make this a better world comes out of his Catholic origins and his growing up as the not so poor, but still

the kid of a socially impoverished family in San Francisco [is to miss the point]. Now who stole from whom? Well, who owns the cloud? None of them. The climate changed and Paul Ward was perfectly free to implement ideas which had also been seen wafting through the assembly chamber, pushed along or blown along by the air exhaled by Jesse or Tom. [Laughter] But if either of them think that they were the fathers of social policy and somehow their children were kidnapped, they're wrong.

SENEY: Let me ask you about this climatic change too, to use your metaphor. Because 1958 was the watershed year in California politics and I wonder if you could characterize and describe that.

NICHOLS: Well, I was a reporter at the time, and not an activist. That's very much the observer rather than the participant reflection. I have, however, an anecdote because I was working with an old NBC hand named [Elmer] Peterson--God, what's Peterson's first name?--who had been with NBC forever and had been with the AP [Associated Press] before that and had gotten his start at the Flora Hotel in Madrid during the time of the Spanish revolution, sharing a room, as I recall,

with an ambulance driver named [Ernest] Hemingway. I was sort of staffed to Peterson or backup writer to Peterson during the NBC coverage of the '58 election. Elmer, thank you, Elmer Peterson and I went off to have me a drink and he a cup of coffee or something afterwards, after we had finally gotten off the air. It was Elmer who said to me, "This may be the most important election that you'll ever have the chance to watch." Talking about the '58 election and talking about his perception that it was a plate shift in politics in the west, politics in California. And I don't know that I had the wit to have any such sense of its importance. You know, I was happy. A lot of things that I was hoping might happen happened, but as an objective reporter, I tried not to cheer on camera. [Laughter] But I think the answer to your question is no, I can't comment on it. It's buried too much in script that I wrote for me to remember what it was I thought.

SENEY: All right. Fair enough. Did you find this a big change from being a reporter to being a participant?

NICHOLS: Uhm.

SENEY: Can you give me a feel of what that means?

NICHOLS: Well, it may seem like a terrible digression, but it is the difference between watching a porn flick and being in bed oneself. The subject matter may be the same but for the man who doesn't know the difference, there's no hope.

SENEY: [Laughter] That's a riveting analogy.

NICHOLS: I mean it most seriously. One of my great reasons for leaving NBC, I mean the phrase that I know I most often used to explain to friends why would I leave this position where I had fame and prospects for, if not fortune then at least a good income to take a job in politics, my answer was I'm tired of observing other people do it. I wanted to get in bed. I am tired of being this kind of voyeur to the most important thing going on in life and that is politics. And I can't stand another year of watching other people do it. I've got to get involved. If I hadn't been offered the job with Pat Brown, I might have been foolish enough to try to run for office myself. Because it seemed to me, maybe driven as Pat Brown himself is, that for those of us who don't have the option of the priesthood or the clergy, it's the other most noble calling. Now, I should say teaching ain't bad either. [Laughter]

SENEY: I want to allude to that because I want to leap forward for a moment anyway to ask you about this kind of being a voyeur because I've often thought that those in the academic world were maybe as much voyeurs as anyone, observing what's going on and commenting on it. Do you find your career in the academic world, which has spanned twenty-three years now, is a lot different than your career as a news reporter, which kind of bracketed your political involvement?

NICHOLS: As a reporter, it seems to me, one says, "Here's what's happening, here's what happened and there's nothing you can do about it." In politics one says, "Here's what's about to happen if you don't do something about it." In education, in the university it's, "Here's what can happen if you don't learn how to prevent it from happening. Or here's what will happen if you can make it happen, if we can learn enough to make it happen." I've not found ever any sense of voyeurism in teaching. The contact with students and the conviction that if I can get this little thing that I may know, read, and have acquired some place, out of my head and into theirs, they will be better able to do it, whatever it is. In that sense, I feel very much

a participant, very involved, very connected to the world, in a way I did not as a reporter. In this job I can do something and something for me more rewarding than politics was. Now I lose less often. I give fewer F's or students earn fewer F's from me, I lost more legislation. There's some way I can connect those two points but I'm not quite [sure] how to do that.

SENEY: I think you have. Let me go back to the Brown staff again and make sure I've asked you about everyone that's important. Sherrill Luke.

NICHOLS: Yes, well, Sherrill's a fascinating story. Sherrill was student body president at UCLA when I was there and we were good friends. We took a trip across the country together to go to a National Student's Association convention. We drove across the country. And I was close to Sherrill. We were and I'm sure still are good friends. In fact, he and his wife ran into my wife on a number of occasions in L.A. and though I haven't seen them lately, Liz reports that the friendship is still solid. When Cecil Poole left, the word went out that the one black member of the staff was going to be replaced by another black member of staff. In those days one did not engage quite so obviously in quota games or in

NICHOLS: finding somebody to sit in the window. There was no question that the politics of the time certainly required that Cecil would be replaced as was Thurgood Marshall by non-quotaing [President George] Bush, by a black man. I recommended to Cecil before, when he was still with us, the name of Sherrill Luke because Sherrill was my friend from UCLA. Sherrill was at the time assistant city manager in Richmond. We had been in some contact, in fact on legislative matters involving the governor's staff. And I had an occasion to talk to Sherrill because I knew, I trusted him, I knew he could give me a very honest report about how this might in fact impact a city. Cecil encouraged me to pursue it and, I think, I'm not sure with anyone else's knowledge, I went down to Richmond and I had lunch with Sherrill. And while I was in no position to offer the job on the governor's staff, I was empowered to find out if he'd be interested. He was very interested. We then laid out a course of action that day at lunch that the recommendation should obviously not come from me because I was still viewed or was viewed as somehow linked to Unruh. I was an Unruh man and had no standing to make such a recommendation

that could actually help Sherrill. So we recommended, Sherrill and I together thinking about sources. One was Assemblyman [Augustus F.] Gus Hawkins who, of course, Sherrill knew and there were others, leadership positions, Frank Williams and others, leaders in the California black community who Sherrill then called.

SENEY: Who was Frank Williams?

NICHOLS: Franklin Williams--what was he doing at the time--he went back subsequently as deputy director of the Peace Corps for Kennedy. At that time he was, was he practicing law in San Francisco? I'm not sure. He was a distinguished, brilliant, enormously articulate spokesperson for the black community in California. And I don't know what his job was. But I'd known him through, I'd known Frank through Frank Manckiewicz in the sort of L.A. activist crowd. At any rate, some of these people I knew better than Sherrill did. A couple of them I think I called before to say, "Sherrill is going to be calling you. Here's what he's going to be asking for." So that within a few days there were a barrage of recommendations to [May] Bonnell, God, the appointment secretary. Bernice's sister, I've just lost her first name, isn't that weird. And

NICHOLS: directly to the governor, those who had immediate access to the governor went directly to Pat, others filed them through the personnel office side, to the appointment side, recommending Sherrill. So we greased his appointment very easily. And it wasn't, in fact, I think until after Sherrill was on board that Hale knew that I'd had any connection with getting Luke the appointment.

When Sherrill showed up and went to work, suddenly it's obvious to everybody that Sherrill and I are friends. We were going to lunch together and hanging out. And Liz and I took Sherrill and Ann around to find them their house which is a funny story because the house that they wanted was the house that the Pooles were selling, that Cecil and his wife were selling. Then there was this whole problem about the fact that what good does it do for another black family to move to Sacramento and buy the house of the black family. We have to find some other house for them to move into, with the notion that [is] the way to advance the cause of social justice. The fact is the Poole's house is the one they did buy [Laughter], on Mulberry Lane,

because it was the best house, at the best price, exactly what they wanted. So.

SENEY: I'm interested in the way the employment worked. Was it not clear that this was kind of orchestrated as all these recommendations began to flow in?

NICHOLS: Oh, I'm sure it was apparent it was orchestrated but what was not apparent was who was orchestrating it. The assumption, I'm sure, was that Sherrill was orchestrating it himself. Or maybe even that Cecil was orchestrating it. And I know Cecil did, in fact. I'm sure Sherrill talked to Cecil about it. They didn't know each other, I don't think, before. I think maybe I introduced them. I'm not sure of that, but they had not, at least, been social friends before. But Cecil understood the imperative of the politics of the thing and was, I think, convinced that Sherrill made great sense. And Sherrill was now a northern Californian that grew up in southern California, had gone to UCLA, and was now the assistant city manager of Richmond. I mean, you know, there weren't very many guys that well qualified, both in terms of demographics of California politics and, in fact, with specific experience relevant to a job on the governor's

staff, namely a guy who knew something about how cities ran which nobody else on that staff did, you know. Pat knew how DA's offices ran but he didn't know much or anything about the impact of city government. Oh, Dick Carpenter who was the lobbyist for the League of California Cities, a man who Pat respected tremendously, was also one of Sherrill's recommenders and that helped considerably.

SENEY: Let me get to someone who is important in your terms because he is the press secretary Jack Burby.

NICHOLS: My relationships with Jack are puzzling. Oddly enough, Jack and I have really never had a chance to discuss this, perhaps one day we will. Jack's wife, Lois, and my wife became fast friends instantly; [they] were each other's best friend. They were the two staff wives who hung out together, who went shopping together. We had kids about the same age and so there was a real unity in the relationship between Lois and Liz. Jack and I had in the first few months, I thought, an extraordinarily close relationship. We did things together. The families were together all the time. We were eating at their house and they at our house. We were taking

NICHOLS: their kids on trips and we were all going together on holidays to the mountains and so on.

I'm not sure that Jack ever understood from Hale what the division of labor was. Periodically, Jack would then treat me as if I were his assistant secretary or backup man. I had understood from the governor that I was radio-television press secretary. I was not an assistant to Jack. I was an assistant to the governor. But with my radio experience particularly, I learned to write very fast. I wrote then the fastest constituent letter, the fastest press release. Before we had computers, I'd developed a system of letter writing. I had my paragraphs numbered. So my secretary would come in and I would hand her the original. And I'd say, "One-seven-five. I'll dictate the body and then use three and nine as our close." Then I would dictate the effective paragraph and all those things then happened. As a result, according to the records that we got every week, I produced more paper--if that's any virtue--than anybody else on the press staff. I wrote more press releases. I wrote more constituent mail. I handled more. I generated more stuff that bore either my signature or Jack's or in most cases

the governor's. But most of these, of course, were materials prepared for the governor's signature. Nevertheless, there was a feeling, I think, by Hale and I think shared by Jack over time, that I was some how not carrying my weight. In fact, I think that's why they started asking me for the weekly reports of who had generated how much work. We got about five of those. Bea Smith who was the head of the secretarial pool at the time was the one who was asked to do this. And she generated them for about a month or maybe two months, and then suddenly she was ordered to stop because it made Jack look awful. And Fred Jordan by that time had joined us as the associate press secretary. And Fred spent a lot of time talking to Jack and Jack spent a lot of time talking to Hale and I spent a lot of time writing. And I had a wonderful secretary who took the fastest dictation I've ever known. So we were the production company. She and I produced the work and the other guys went around and schmoozed. But there was, I think, a sense that somehow I wasn't doing my job. Now it may have been . . .

SENEY: . . . Did you have any feeling of what the specifics were in that?

NICHOLS: Well, after the fact, of course, I have always assumed that at some point about then somebody had leaked the true rumor that I was gay and that suddenly I became increasingly isolated from the old boy's network on the staff. That did not apply to Sherrill. It didn't apply to Alex Pope whose friendship I've maintained without any difficulty. But some of the rest of the staff, and certainly Hale and Jack and Fred Jordan, really begin to isolate me. And invitations to parties stopped. Socializing ended. I know the story; I don't know whether the story's true about the way the information about my being a closet homosexual got to the governor's staff, through a guy named Richard Cline. And I think probably, I assume it's a true story. At any rate, that . . .

SENEY: . . . We'll get into that when we talk about that subject as a whole.

NICHOLS: At any rate I became, I was increasingly isolated from the staff and it got terribly petty. I was having difficulty getting material out of the back, out of the secretarial staff. Fortunately, the women in the back, and most particularly Bea Smith who was the head of the secretarial pool, had decided that I was a terrific person. It got

to the point, for example, where the locks on the door were changed so that I couldn't get into the office any more, and then Bea Smith would meet me outside the back door every morning with the new key. And every time they'd change the lock, she'd give me a new key. So then Jack and Hale would arrive to find me at my desk in my office and they never asked me how I got in, but they then went through another elaborate effort trying to find out who kept providing me with the keys. And it became a great joke. I had a good friend who was the lobbyist for Savings and Loan League who heard the story from somebody about how this was happening and so he had me made, he gave me a ring of keys one day, about fifty keys on a ring saying, "I know you are collecting keys. Here's this prize." But it got very petty and very foolish.

SENEY: As we discussed before when we started the interview, although this certainly makes sense to talk about this now, I want to see if we can't put this all in one part. We may need to repeat a little of this as we go on later. But let me back up a little because I gave you a copy of an

interview that Jack Burby¹ did and Jack says . .

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NICHOLS: . . . That's right and Jack says in the interview that I was the associate press secretary.

SENEY; That's right, that's right.

NICHOLS: History reveals my appointment document and my photograph which isn't with me anymore. But my signed picture that Pat gives to new staff, all of those documents and my official appointment document describes me as radio-television press secretary. I was paid exactly the same salary as Jack. And his title was press secretary which I assume refers to print because you don't run other stuff. And I was radio-television--bad word press secretary--a radio-television news secretary would have made better sense, better English. I had been told by the governor and initially by Fred Dutton when he and I had our conversation that the position was precisely equal, separate but equal. It was, of course, exceedingly naive of me to believe that the battles that the electronic media were fighting with the print media would some how stop at the

¹John F. Burby, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1988 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.

office of the governor's door. Hale had no respect for radio-television journalists and I was one of them. And I certainly was never Hale's choice for that job.

SENEY: We should say here that Hale Champion had been the press secretary . . .

NICHOLS: . . . He'd been press secretary . . .

SENEY: Fred Dutton was chief of staff. Dutton leaves as you described to go with Kennedy . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Exactly and . . .

SENEY: . . . Hale Champion becomes chief of staff and hires Jack Burby to replace himself. And then very quickly, you come.

NICHOLS: Well, you see, Jack and I were hired and went to work the same day. The announcement in The Sacramento Bee which I read over coffee in the old El Mirador Hotel announcing my appointment also announces Jack Burby's appointment. August 15, I would think maybe was the date of 1960. Whatever that Monday is close to the fifteenth.

SENEY: In his interview, I think, he refers to you even as a nice young fellow . . .

NICHOLS: [Laughter]

SENEY: . . . Who was the assistant or associate press secretary and what not and none of these other matters that we've just talked about in terms of

your orientation came out in his interview, but clearly the implication if one were only to read his interview and not have available as will be the case, your interview, you would certainly be left with the impression that you were a subordinate of his.

NICHOLS: I was not. On one occasion when my parents, in fact made their final trip before my mother's death, to visit us, we had gone off on a holiday, gone up to the Napa Valley. When I got back, in fact, I'd come back because there was a party at the Cline's house that night--when I arrived there was tension. Jack Burby informed me that I ought not ever leave without reporting to him, and he'd been trying to reach me over the weekend, and where had I been. I reported to Jack that I didn't report to him and that the governor knew where I was that weekend and told me to have a nice time with my parents. Now, if they wanted to find out where I was, ask Pat or Bernice who undoubtedly would know where I was because they were the people I worked for. I also worked for Hale. And I'd assumed if Hale had wanted to know he would have asked me himself. Now, Jack, I don't work for you. I am not your assistant.

SENEY: When you say it was naive of you, I guess you mean naive to think that these kind of bureaucratic wars wouldn't go on.

NICHOLS: Well, this specifically is the war between the legitimate print media, legitimate in heavy italics, and the upstart radio-television media. The reason I got the job was because I had led the battle for equal treatment in Los Angeles in the radio-television news club. You know, Hale had pushed me down at a press conference because I was in there with my cameras and had ordered me out and CBS was still filming, our cameras had been pushed over by Hale, and . . .

SENEY: . . . This was a governor's press conference?

NICHOLS: At the governor's press conference. The old rules had been that the print media got their interview and then when they were all finished with everything they wanted, then the electronics got to come in. Roy Heatly, now a Sacramento public relations man, was at that time with us at NBC. And Roy and I agreed we weren't going to live by those rules anymore. We were going to show up early, our cameras were going to go in and we would have to be thrown out. The first press conference that we did that was the press conference with Nelson Rockefeller, and Nelson

NICHOLS: Rockefeller caved in and left the press conference. And there was no press conference because we wouldn't leave and the print media wouldn't allow a press conference to happen as long as the electronics were there. The next press conference after that was a press conference in Pat Brown's office. And so I arrived early with my cameraman Dexter Alley-- Bill Stout was the CBS reporter and he and his cameraman--we set up in front and we turned our lights on and the print media were all objecting to us and haranguing us. Then the governor and Hale Champion walked in and we began to film them as they walked in. Hale ordered us to turn off the lights and get our cameras out of there, and that, of course, wasn't going to happen. And I said we weren't moving. Hale pushed me and I fell backwards a little dramatically and was pushed against our camera which then fell to the floor and CBS continued to film. We did open the Huntley-Brinkley [NBC national news report] that night with the footage of an NBC reporter being knocked to the ground by the governor's press secretary. The response to that, of course, was that Pat then offered me the job as radio-television press secretary. Consistent with

Pat's policy, reward your enemies [Laughter] and to hell with your friends. That was the last time that ever happened. After that, we had equal access. That was the sole demonstration required. After that, the print media gave up. I think that was probably because at that time the L.A. Times owned Channel 13 in L.A. and I think the L.A. Times decided they were not going to disadvantage their own property by continuing this separate but equal, so it ended in California as of that governor's press conference, as I recall.

SENEY: Let me read something to you from Jack Burby's interview here because it gets right to this point. And maybe we can clear up, or maybe not clear up, but at least get on the record another view. He said until 1962 there were two news conferences: first the print guys would ask the governor questions in his office . . .

NICHOLS: . . . And he's wrong by that entire time period. Uh, oh, oh, wait a minute, no. In the governor's, the governor's press conferences in Sacramento . . .

SENEY: . . . Yes. Then he goes on to say electronic media were not allowed to ask questions. Then they'd go into another room, the cameras would be

set up, and the electronic media people would ask the governor the same questions. This I might add is on page 69 and 70.¹ On page 73 he goes on to say the print guys would ask questions with obscenities in them so that the electronic media couldn't use them. Then . . .

NICHOLS: . . . [Laughter] . . .

SENEY: . . . Let me put one more thing in there. And then he says speed graphic cameras' flashes would go off into a television camera "by accident. It would wipe out the TV camera image for a few minutes."²

NICHOLS: Burned, burned in the old tubes . . .

SENEY: . . . Do you recall this, the obscenities and the flash cameras?

NICHOLS: The obscenity story, and I don't know whether I get the credit for this or not--Jack may have his own story--didn't happen in Sacramento. I don't recall any of that and I was at every press conference for '60 to '62. So I don't think that's true here. In fact, at that time the dean of the press corps in Sacramento was a man named Squire Behrens or Earl C. Behrens. And Squire would never have permitted anybody back a second

¹John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.

²John F. Burby, Oral History Interview, page 73.

time if there had ever been an obscenity out of anyone's mouth. Squire ran that press conference with an iron hand. And Squire Behrens was a most distinguished and patrician fellow who would not have allowed such a thing to happen.

SENEY: Is that why he had the nickname Squire?

NICHOLS: Yes, but there is a story and I know it's one I've told Jack and undoubtedly Jack has had the same experience. But mine involved Averell Harriman when we were trying to do such an interview with Averell Harriman in Los Angeles. And Harriman did two things. First of all, as soon as the camera went on, he pulled out a large white handkerchief and he blew his nose and picked his nose throughout the entire interview, making he felt . . .

[End Tape 5, Side B]

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

SENEY: You would say that Averell Harriman tried to ruin an interview by using a handkerchief?

NICHOLS: Yes.

SENEY: Tell me a little more about that?

NICHOLS: He was at the--oh, God, I keep calling it the World Affairs Council; it's really the L.A. counterpart to that--whatever that thing's called, anyway. Well, they get together and

NICHOLS: listen to somebody tell them important things. And Harriman was the guest and we were doing an interview with Harriman. Harriman notoriously despised television. And why I don't know because he really came across on the tube beautifully. Harriman pulled out a large white handkerchief and began to blow his nose and pick his nose, pretty grossly, and occasionally throw in a word of obscenities. And we got the film back and were sitting with John Thompson who was the vice president of the western division and looking at this footage. And John said, "What are you going to do that, Lee?" And I said, "I think I'd like to air it just as it is. Now we'll dub the sound on the obscenities, but I think we got a point to make here. And I think let's play it straight. You know, I mean, we've got no right to edit him out, just because he's picking his nose and looks ugly as hell. That's what he was doing." So we went with it and I got great thanks from the network. Rueven Frank, again, the president of NBC news, called to tell me that he liked the spot. He thought it was gutsy and I think that's the last time Harriman tried to pull that trick.

NICHOLS: The quote from Burby about the flashing lights and cameras. That would have gone on in L.A. and I'm sure it must have gone on in San Francisco. I, of course, was working very closely with all the news teams in Sacramento, and I don't recall it ever, ever happening in Sacramento. Sacramento television was, of course, first of all a very, a very tame beast in those years. And nothing like the kind of pushy people that I worked with in L.A. or the crews in San Francisco. So they were much more amenable to the rules. And again, of course, the McClatchys [owners of The Sacramento Bee] owned Channel 13. There was an in bed relationship between the old Sacramento Union and KCRA. It was an intense relationship; the press corps drank together. The TV reporters drank with the--the anchors certainly didn't--but the TV reporters, the political reporters, were on good terms with the print media. I don't recall those stories applying to any press conference in Sacramento.

 I think Jack is right, as I recall, I would think that maybe a year, one year off, but originally the governor's press conferences were held in his office which, you know, the

governor's office in the capital, is very large. And we would bring in tables, saw horses, and planks, you know, like picnic tables. There's a number of photographs--I have some of them around--of those press conferences. There was no room to get cameras in there physically; it would have been extremely difficult. The cameras would, in those first years, be set up in the conference room, the big hall right behind the foyer to the suite of governor's offices. By the time I left the entire activity took place in that room. And the war was over by that time.

SENEY: He says, and maybe you answered this, but let me read one more thing he says about this conflict between the print media and the other people. He says, "Part of it was economic. The newspapers were afraid television would wipe them out."¹

NICHOLS: I'm sure that, you know, young Mr. [William Randolph] Hearst and the Knowlands [owners of the Oakland Tribune] and maybe the Chandlers [owners of the Los Angeles Times] were aware of that possibility, but the [San Francisco] Chronicle owned KRON and, I don't know, did the Tribune have a TV station then? I don't know but the L.A. Times had a station. The Sacramento Bee had

¹John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.

NICHOLS: a station. The competition between print and the electronic may have been in the consciousness of a reporter. It certainly was of little concern to the folks who owned the papers because the folks who owned the papers owned the television stations. And it didn't make much difference to them, I don't think, where their dollar came from. Reporters were offended, [but] a number of kids that I'd gone to graduate school with took jobs in newspapers. I got a job at NBC. My starting salary was more than twice their starting salaries. We were overpaid, grossly overpaid. I suspect to some degree that's still true. I think that there's been a greater equality in salaries, but it really was, "Gee, you don't know what you're doing. You're just a pretty talking head and you're getting paid twice as much as I am." It was really not the implication that I got from Jack's interview, that there was some kind of, you know, theory of economies and the economic condition of the newspapers [that created a conflict]. The economic condition of the individual reporter, yes. And it was a much more personal and therefore much more rankling thing. The Bee wasn't worried about the Bee going out of

business because of television. The reporter for the Bee might have been pissed off as hell because he's getting paid less than the reporter who has come over from Channel 13 that the Bee also owns and they're paying that talking head twice as much as they're paying this seasoned reporter. That, I think, is a legitimate explanation. But there's also the fact that those of us who'd worked in the electronic media, you know, I mean, it is utterly stupid, but I was occasionally asked for my autograph when I was in Los Angeles because somebody had seen me on the tube covering some story and I was therefore [Interruption] famous. Now there aren't very many reporters who anybody asks for their autograph.

SENEY: Did Pat Brown come to the point of view when you were working for him that TV was going to be far more important than the print media and that was the one he should spend his time on? Did you sense that in your relations with him?

NICHOLS: I don't know why I was hired. That is to say, I don't know what Pat Brown would say about why I was hired. I came in with the impression from my entrance interview with the governor after I'd already agreed to take the job, I had the

NICHOLS: impression that he [Laughter] believed in the first amendment, that he didn't give a damn about whether it was television or radio or print, he cared a lot about getting his point of view expressed. I never got any clue that he ever had any anti-TV bias or anti-radio bias. So there wasn't something to overcome. Nor even did it require much change in the way he thought. If anything, I would guess that Pat probably had a little inclination toward liking radio-television better because he thought, like most politicians, that he was frequently misquoted or that his quotations were taken and placed in an inappropriate context and therefore that he was, in effect, misquoted or that the sense was lost. And when he could say it in his own words, say it with somebody looking, I think he felt more comfortable. I mean, Pat's a politician. Politicians would rather greet you face to face [Laughter] than write you a letter. Most any decent politician understands the motivation of loyalty and, you know, what the notion of charisma does to a voter's inclination to support you. So I think Pat was enough of a showman, enough of a politician, to appreciate what it was that television could do for him, long before he

ever met me. I didn't contribute to that. That was a view that I think he had and maybe that's why I was offered the job. And again my guess is that it is a conversation that must have happened between Fred Dutton and the governor and I suspect not between Hale and the governor. Unless just maybe getting me out of L.A. and getting me on his staff to quiet me might have seemed like a good idea at the time. [Laughter]

SENEY: Let me ask you about his staff, the quality overall and the way he used his staff.

NICHOLS: Without including myself here, except by implication, I think it was an extraordinarily bright staff. I think, and I've said this about almost everybody that I think that I've mentioned, it was like being on the university faculty or like the incredible group that I served with in the army where they all had Ph.D.s. It was a congeries of bright men and women who liked the debate, who thought conversation was important and words were important and ideas were important. You know, I mean that it had been a long time. There were a lot of people out there who were pretty damned happy that Pat Brown had been elected governor and that he had been elected with this kind of

NICHOLS: Stevensonian [group]. With the change in California politics which Stevenson had made a significant contribution to because he brought a lot of people into the party, as Kennedy had subsequently, brought a lot of new people to the party. And all of a sudden we had a governor and, you know, I think the governor could have asked any university president in the state to come and serve in his staff and they would have happily left their tenured sinecures to come to Sacramento. It was very exciting place to be. We were inventing politics. We were reinventing politics perhaps, but we had the feeling that this was all terribly new, that we had a chance to make an enormous difference.

It was, observing it as a reporter before I joined the staff, a real Camelot feeling with Dutton and with Warren Christopher and with that extraordinary pre-Kennedy staff, Pat's staff before the Kennedy election and still after that. I have some strong reservations about Hale but I certainly do not, in fact, doubt his intelligence which has been amply established by the developments in his own career. And while I didn't see it, I knew it's there anyway. And Jack Burby's distinguished career, Cecil Poole's,

Sherrill Luke's, John Vasconcellos', the men and women on that staff can look back on that and take great pride in having been part of that experience. And the governor should he choose can look at his staff and say, "Boy, I did a good job. Look at what's happened to those men and women since." The GREs [Graduate Record Examinations] are predictors. [Laughter]

SENEY: What did Vasconcellos do for the governor? I know he was travel secretary for a while.

NICHOLS: When Tuck left, I played travel secretary on a couple of trips. One of those was a trip down to Santa Clara where the governor was making a speech. And the monsignor was old and frail and ill and was not able to leave his apartment to come down to hear Pat's speech. So afterwards the governor and I went up to the monsignor's private apartment and were served coffee from a handsome samovar. The governor started out making small talk. The monsignor was not the least bit interested in making small talk. The monsignor had an agenda item and that agenda item's name was John Vasconcellos. And before we left his quarters, he had extracted from Pat a promise that he would hire John Vasconcellos. I wrote the name down. On the way back in the

NICHOLS: limousine to the airport, I mean, and fly back to Sacramento, the governor told me to tell May [Smith] that we were going to hire that whatever his name was. In fact, I think he pronounced it and came up with some totally different name, called him something else. Anyway, I went to May to tell her that the governor was about to hire a guy named John Vasconcellos and maybe we ought to get him up for an interview or something. I met John the day he came to Sacramento, had not met him as I recall in Santa Clara that day though I may have; that's a little vague. At any rate the day he came up, I think monsignor must have said, "Here, contact this man whose name was Nichols." Because John came to see me and I took him around and handled and, you know, introduced him to staff and handled the paper work and so on. The governor had obviously told Hale too because none of this was coming as a surprise to him. But at any rate the open spot was travel secretary, so John was plugged in as the governor's travel secretary. Hale Champion, or Dick Tuck had, of course, this terrible reputation for never being where he was supposed to be. The governor was forever having to carry Dick Tuck's bags. The governor would be on board a commercial plane

which would then have to be held until Tuck got there. The governor, I think, liked Dick a lot, but Tuck was just the world's worst travel secretary. [Laughter] The advance man who gets there three days later. But it turns out Vasconcellos had trouble getting up in the morning. John liked to sleep in. And John is going strong at three in the morning but at seven he isn't too bright-eyed. And so we had another travel secretary who was [Laughter] never there when the governor wanted him. John got over that pretty quickly. But, of course, that was toward the end of my tenure. I've known John, and we've been good friends ever since, of course.

SENEY: He's now a very powerful member of the assembly, and for many years chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. A very powerful member of the assembly. John and I see each other maybe once every couple of years. We have had a sometimes troubled friendship but some years ago when I was in the hospital for some surgery, the last person I saw before I was given a pill was John who was sitting at my bedside. When I came out of the anesthetic John was in my room and literally

holding my hand as I came out of anesthetic.

John is a great friend in need. Well, period.

SENEY: When did you leave the governor's office? It was 1962.

NICHOLS: That was during the time when they were changing the locks on the doors and finally Hale had to tell me--Hale had moved across the hall as executive secretary, as finance director during that same period. Is that true? I think so because I think what's-his-name from the AG's office had come over to replace Hale at that point. I may be wrong but the timing is approximately right. At any rate, Hale informed me that I was to be fired, or I was leaving, or whatever. And I don't know quite how that was said, but I went in to see the governor and the governor seemed quite nervous about it. The governor kept saying, "But CBS wants you back." [That was] typical of the governor, of course; I'd never worked for CBS. [Laughter] What he didn't know is, in fact, I did have an offer from CBS in L.A. I could have gone back to NBC, but I also had an offer from CBS. Liz and I had fallen in love with Sacramento at that point. We owned a home that we liked and we wanted to stay in. We liked the way we could live in this town, much

NICHOLS: better than the way we had lived in L.A. So our inclination was to stay. It's interesting because the day that I was informed that I was going to be leaving the governor's staff, I walked up to have lunch with Dan Luevano. Danny Luevano was deputy director of finance under Hale Champion, subsequently deputy undersecretary of the U.S. army under Lyndon Johnson. Danny and Larry Margolis were brothers-in-law. Danny had married Larry Margolis' sister. Danny and somebody else and Larry and I went up to lunch in Capitol Tamale. And on the way up to lunch, they were talking in shorthand. Obviously whatever it was they were talking about I was not supposed to be involved in, and I finally said as we were crossing the street at Tenth, "Would you guys find it any easier to carry on this conversation, either if I weren't here or if you knew I'd just been fired by the governor?" By Hale. At that point they said, "Oh, God, Lee, that's wonderful because what we're planning is this retreat. We are all going down to Carmel to plan Jesse's political future and now that you don't work for the governor any more, will you come too?" [Laughter] Twenty minutes later we were making plans to all go to . . .

SENEY: . . . This is the same day you'd had your conference with the governor.

NICHOLS: Yes, it was an interesting day. I went home to tell Liz what had happened, that I'd been fired from the governor's office and I appeared to have a job over on the other side so not to worry. I then faced the interesting problem of how to explain my leaving. And . . .

SENEY: Because you're certain it was connected with not your performance but your orientation.

NICHOLS: It was connected with either my orientation, sexually, or my closeness to, or perceived closeness to Jesse. "I couldn't be trusted. I would tell. I would talk to people," which I didn't, but that's immaterial. I understood that there were things that I knew about Jesse that I would not have carried to the governor's office. And there were things that I knew about the governor that I would never have carried to Jesse. I mean that you can't live in the political world without understanding that you cannot always say everything you know. But any rate, I faced this dilemma then of how to get out of the governor's office with my reputation intact. So I wrote a press release announcing, as was, in fact, that afternoon the case, that I

was leaving the governor's staff to become director of the campaign to pass the beach and park bond issue.¹ Jesse had just said, "You want to run the campaign? Good, now you can run the campaign for the beach and parks bond," because he and Cameron, Senator [Ronald G.] Cameron were the co-authors and they damn well were going to make the decisions about who ran the campaign. So Jesse said, "Go run the campaign." There was no money. I had to raise that too and my salary. At any rate, I had an immediate job to go to. So I issued a press release. And, of course, I quoted the governor at length because that was my job. I wrote quotes for Pat Brown and Pat Brown reported that he was terribly sorry to lose me, one of the most distinguished and valued members of his personal staff but that the beach and park bond issue was so important to him that he was willing to have me leave in order that I could do this even more important job. Those aren't exactly the words but it was the most grandiloquent speech that I think Pat ever delivered.

SENEY: Your creation entirely.

¹Proposition 5 (June, 1962).

NICHOLS: Entirely my creation, but it wasn't required, the governor did not have to see the press release before it went out. He trusted his staff and it was not, in fact, anything that I think he was embarrassed to have said. I knew his position on the beach and park bond. He was vitally interested. I then went in the back--not trusting the mail carriers--I went in the back and gave it to Bea Smith who then had it run off. She then gave me the copies and I then went upstairs and hand distributed the press release to the press corps. And then I went back down stairs and cleaned out my desk and left.

And the next morning the [San Francisco] Chronicle reported, the governor's support of the bond issue, which had been in some doubt up to now, was now clear, that he had given it his full support because he had released his top staff man to run the campaign. Now I was not the top staff man but that's how the [San Francisco] Chronicle reported it. So I know that everybody downstairs, Jack and Hale, must have been just livid. Because instead of firing me, they had inadvertently promoted me and had given me all this additional notoriety and fame. Now I was running a statewide bond campaign and I talked

Robert Gordon Sproul and old Doc, old Mr. [Joseph R.] Knowland, owner of The Oakland Tribune into being the co-chairs of the campaign.

SENEY: Which Knowland was that, the former senator?

NICHOLS: His dad. Old what's his name? Anyway, Papa Knowland who was in his dotage, but said yes. Certainly he was in favor of beaches and parks. So I ended up the next day able to issue a press release that announced that Robert Gordon Sproul and . . .

SENEY: . . . The president of the University of California . . .

NICHOLS: . . . The president of the University of California and Senior Knowland of The Oakland Tribune had agreed to be co-sponsors. I got the Bank of America to put up the first money, all based on the press release, right. This must really be important to the governor. I just read it in the paper. It's really important to the governor. Fine, we'll serve because we want to make Pat happy. Right, Pat didn't give a damn. No, he did care about the bond issue. We lost the campaign. We won the campaign but failed to get the two-thirds. So the day after the campaign, I was then offered the job as the consultant to the Assembly Committee on Ways and

Means. Jesse had just left to become speaker. And I took over. And Bob Crown had taken over as chair of Ways and Means. And I'd been moved up as Bob Crown's chief of staff.

SENEY: Why did it need two-thirds?

NICHOLS: Bond acts in those days required two-thirds vote. We missed the two-thirds by about less than a vote per precinct. It was a tough loss except. . . . It was my first statewide campaign. I'd never run a statewide campaign. Hell, I . . .

SENEY: . . . How did you approach it?

NICHOLS: Well, of course, using television principally, because I couldn't afford advertising and much of anything else. We were begging dollars . . .

SENEY: . . . And creating news essentially?

NICHOLS: I did do the editorial meetings, and we got intro and support from every paper in the state, I think. I don't recall. Maybe we lost the San Diego Union, I'm not sure. But we got support from most of the papers. [We] got Sproul to make a couple of speeches, and he was always good for copy. And then I cranked out stories for the press; you know, we'd take somebody off and put them in front of a redwood tree some place. I got great cooperation from the electronics. And the print were fine too. We didn't have any

problems. We almost carried it. We did win, but we didn't win with quite enough votes to pass the two-thirds.

SENEY: So the day after the election you are on Bob Crown's staff now as chief consultant to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

NICHOLS: Consultant to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. Bob had just come up from Elections and Reapportionment and had brought with him Lou Angelo, recently deceased. There was a tension because Jesse had told Bob I was now going to be his consultant. And Bob and I had met only fairly briefly. I don't think Bob was very happy about suddenly having Jesse hire his staff for him. Besides he had a staff. Right now he can't give Lou the job he wanted to give his former staffer; he's now got to dump him back down to the number two position because he had to make room for this legacy that he inherited from Jesse. Bob and I, however, became very, very, very, very, close friends. Bob was a very closeted gay. We didn't come out to each other for probably a year. We were on a trip together in San Diego; we both finally told each other the truth about our lives.

SENEY: I want to save all of this for one part of it, for this may turn out one of the more important parts of the interview.

NICHOLS: Fine. I'll come back to it, but at that point I want to suggest that the relationship which was troubled by my being a legacy was then also troubled by Bob's suspicion that I was probably gay and the implications that might have for his position, having a gay staffer. Because everybody knew Bob was. I mean I'd heard that in the governor's office the second day I was there. Frank Chambers had said, "Lee, you go up and take this. We got to get this thing up to Bob Crown and make him happy. You're the cutest boy on the staff so we'll send you up to Bob Crown because he'll go ga-ga over you."

SENEY: You know this . . .

NICHOLS: . . . With no negative at all. Chambers wasn't saying "the faggot upstairs." He was just saying, you know, "If it was somebody else, I would send a pretty woman. It's Bob, you send him a pretty boy."

SENEY: This is very interesting because I wanted to ask you about this, and I may as well ask now as later, and that's about [Senator James R.] Jim

Mills' book, Disorderly House. Have you read that book?

NICHOLS: Yes. Yes, and Jim certainly plays a larger part in that book than he did in real life.

SENEY: Well, yes, I've heard that.

NICHOLS: OK. My version of this place, I play [unintelligible]. We are forgiven for only knowing the history that we lived.

SENEY: I want to bring up Bob Crown on this because the book repeatedly refers to Bob Crown as a legendary womanizer.

NICHOLS: Oh, he was.

SENEY: . . . In whose clutches no woman was safe.

NICHOLS: That's absolutely true. Bob devoted more energy to his cover story than any gay man I've ever known. You know, and I don't mean limited to stories. But the fact is Bob, you know, had some frequent short term affairs and a couple of long term affairs with women. I know, indeed, specifically how sex was achieved which I'm not going to report except to say that it did not involve conventional missionary fornication. But Bob felt it absolutely necessary to create this impression that he was one of the great Don Juans in the building. And then we'd go to the gym and then another truth would be revealed. I say

this, you know, not to out him and certainly not to in any sense, you know, to offend the sensibilities of those who cared about him, as I cared about him, but it seems to me that the way Bob was treated, and I'm thinking here of a guy like Frank Chambers, an old guard Democratic ward heeler from San Francisco, you know, devout Catholic, if we could have just gotten Bob and Frank to sit down once and talk. If Bob could have been honest, if Bob could have gotten out of his closet, I think among other things he would [have] lived certainly longer than he did. But he was a tormented man. Tormented by this terrible burden of a secret that he kept, that he was sure nobody knew. And everybody in town knew, like eight or ten current members that we could discuss and I won't.

SENEY: Yes, I understand. You know his reputation, apart from all this, is as a very brilliant man .

. .

NICHOLS: . . . Uhm . . .

SENEY: . . . Extremely effective. Talk about him as a legislator . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Ahhh . . .

SENEY: . . . Because I want to get back to all of this with you and we'll say more about him.

NICHOLS: Several things, several stories about Bob. Bob had a great appreciation for the written word. Bob decided early on that he liked the way I wrote, he liked the way I put sentences together when I talked. Bob's line was--everybody in Sacramento in those years had to hear it--Bob whenever he introduced me to anybody he would say, "This is Lee Nichols. I have a great head on his shoulders." And that's a "Crownism." Bob would say to me, sometimes he'd read something I'd written, and he say, "God, I wish I said that. I wish I'd said that and, of course, now I have." [Laughter]

[End Tape 6, Side A]

[Session 4, December 3, 1991]

[Begin Tape 7, Side A]

SENEY: We were talking about Bob Crown last time and we just started to talk about him. I think my question was prefaced by saying he was a man who had a considerable reputation for his abilities. And you went to work for him in the Ways and Means Committee.

NICHOLS: Yes. At the time that I left the governor's staff, I went off to run the beach and park bond campaign. And that, of course, was also the same period that Jesse was then moving upstairs or moving down the hall as speaker. Jesse Unruh had been former chair of Ways and Means, of course, when [Assemblyman] Ralph [M.] Brown was speaker. Jesse was now to be speaker and Bob Crown then moved up to take the job as chair of Ways and Means, moving from his previous position in Elections and Reapportionment. He brought with him Lou Angelo from his staff and then really I was assigned to him. Although I had met Bob before, we had not been friends really, hardly

more than acquaintances. And suddenly Unruh informed Bob, I think, that I came as part of the package. So I was suddenly on Bob's staff as well. Happily, we got to be good friends but it started out a little tense, since I really pushed his staff person into the second position because I came in as a legacy of the office.

SENEY: What were some of the issues that Ways and Means were dealing with in those days? I want you to tell me about the issues. I also want you to tell me how the committee worked because it's a large committee. It was then, and it still is.

NICHOLS: At that time, there were a number of things. A couple come quickly to mind. We were doing the Capital Area Plan which led, of course, to the development of CADA [Capital Area Development Authority] and all . . .

SENEY: . . . Let me stop you to ask why would Ways and Means be handling the Capital Area Plan?

NICHOLS: Well, because one of the subcommittees of Ways and Means is the Committee on Capital Outlay. And since there is no other logical committee in the legislature, questions of should there be a separate house for the legislature, what should we do about the governor's mansion, should we build a governor's mansion, what do we do about

increased state building--more offices for agencies--what do we do, in fact, about Sacramento in which General Services already owned a lot of real estate? But there hadn't up to that time been a plan. Clearly state government was the most important business in downtown Sacramento. And therefore what state government did would influence the whole character of the city, the architecture, the design of the city. So one of the projects was the Capital Area Plan. Jesse, when he was chair of Ways and Means, had a great interest in tourism. Partly because if you chaired a subcommittee on tourism, you got to go to all the resorts in California. But also because Jesse-- and I say that facetiously though it's one of the things that Jesse was not unaware of that purpose--was also very aware of the significance of tourism in California. I'm listing now projects in which I had considerable involvement. In fact, I was the staff person to the subcommittee on Tourism and the California Economy.

SENEY: Let me stop to ask you, as chief staff person on the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, you could decide who the staffs were in the subcommittees.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. That is also to say that I picked the one I wanted. Actually, I also did it because Bob knew of my interest in the economics and tourism. And this went back to my days at NBC when I had done a long series on tourism, on the economic impact of tourism. And because I knew enough about economics to know about the peculiar multiplier effect of tourist dollars and the very low demands that they make on the systems, on schools and so on. So I had already had a little background in the economics of tourism and a great interest in the subject. Bob also gave it to me because I asked for it. But I don't think that's true; I think Bob told me I was going to staff that committee. [Assemblyman] Tom Bane, as I recall, was the chair of the subcommittee on Capital Outlay. We worked very closely with Tom. We hired some outside staff for his . . .

SENEY: . . . He's still a member of the legislature.

NICHOLS: Oh, I know. Yes, well, back again because he left in between. He went back down to L.A. for a while, lost one race, and then was reelected, came back to the legislature. And we were also at that time involved in a very major battle over textbooks and the whole on-going struggle that California keeps having with the notion whether

the state printer should print all textbooks or do we buy the finished books from publishers.

[Interruption]

NICHOLS: There had been a long on-going battle involving The Sacramento Bee particularly and the state office of printing. The Bee, sort of representing non-public sector printers, had always thought that this state office of printing was some sort of communist plot, socialist plot.

SENEY: Let me stop you to ask, wasn't there some evidence at this point that the state printer was printing far too many copies of the textbooks?

NICHOLS: Well, the state printing plant in those years was really a very badly run operation. You know, under equipped, their capitalization was too low; they didn't have good hardware. It was a mess. And it was a battle worth fighting. I didn't actually serve, I think, as consultant to that subcommittee but was involved with it. Let's see, at the moment those are the issues that come quickly to mind. I can think of those fights and as we talk probably others will come to mind.

SENEY: Tell me how the committee was organized from your point of view, from the staff point of view.

NICHOLS: Well, legislation is, of course, referred to Ways and Means partly statutorily. That is, if it

involves the outlay of public funds, it has to go to the finance committees as a consideration of its impact on the total budget and the total financial state of the state. Other bills are referred to Ways and Means on occasion which may not have, on the basis of the legislative analyst's judgment, a fiscal impact, but which have some kind of tangential impact. For example, to Ways and Means, in those years, were referred all the bills on the so-called, or implications of a possible peace dividend. That is, we were having at that time a brief lull in the Cold War and the notion was that we would be cutting back on defense spending and what are we going to do with all the defense industries, and so on. So we held a number of hearings on the conversion of California's economy and the technology of conversion. And we held those all up and down the state, trying to find civilian or peacetime applications of some of the technology. And I did serve as staff to that committee which was a fascinating task.

SENEY: Who chaired that committee?

NICHOLS: Oh, Lord, who did? I supposed Bob chaired that himself, I think. I don't remember.

SENEY: I want to ask you about something. And I thought your answer might have been [Assemblyman James] Jim Mills chaired it.

NICHOLS: Ah, thank you. Good. Of course, Jim chaired it. Yes, thank you.

SENEY: Because there was an incident that he relates in his book, having to do with some contracts that Hale Champion and Pat Brown had let that dealt with this very area, that is the . . .

NICHOLS: . . . That's right. I'd forgotten all about that . . .

SENEY: . . . The conversion of space and defense industries to more mundane civilian kinds of things. If you recall, Mills was encouraged, he says in his book, by Ken Cory to put Hale Champion and the governor on the griddle because these contracts were not let in a legal fashion. Do you recall that?

NICHOLS: No, I don't. And it's not surprising that I don't recall because I don't think I would have ever been involved. Ken Cory, as you know, I hired him to come up to Sacramento. No, that's not true. He was already here as consultant to the Education Committee and then I hired him for our staff. Ken has a way of, did have a way of doing legislative business in which he looked for

conflict, and he looked for the kind of poker player's opportunity to take advantage. I was known, and I think that this was never intended as a compliment, as the Boy Scout. So if it involved that kind of manipulation of interests, particularly if it involved contracts, I would probably have been excluded from the conversation. I tended to make ethical arguments at improper times, in the wrong bars, and was known as a pain-in-the-ass, I think, because of it. A lot of things that they were doing I didn't approve of. You know, as I said at the beginning of this, politics is my religion. And I didn't like having priests steal any of the candelabra.

SENEY: Let me go back to the ways in which the Ways and Means Committee works. Crown is the chair. You are the chief consultant on the committee; it's divided into a series of subcommittees.

NICHOLS: Correct.

SENEY: The legislation flows in. I expect the determination of which subcommittee was pretty much determined by the subject matter of the . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Almost always. There were no subcommittee chairs, obviously, in whom Bob didn't trust and

probably who hadn't been already discussed with the speaker, the speaker Jesse. So that process was essentially pro forma. There were times that a bill, we might jiggle it a little bit and engineer it into a subcommittee. And I'm thinking again of the Capital Area stuff, things that would go to the committee on Capital Outlay, because we saw that it might have an implication for that plan. So that something that might normally have gone to our subcommittee, which effectively was on governmental organization, instead we'd move it over to the Capital Outlay Committee because we perceived some--if their staff is going to grow over in [the Department of] Agriculture, they're going to need more space and that therefore we bumped it to another committee. Occasionally.

SENEY: And each of the subcommittees would have a staff as well.

NICHOLS: Well, most of that time, Lou Angelo and I and, of course, an outstanding committee clerical staff. And then we would have, most of the, time only one more person who was an intern. The staffing really came significantly from Alan Post's office, from the Office of Legislative Analyst, no longer Alan Post's. Seems hard to believe but

Alan isn't running it anymore. [Laughter] So that our committees, in addition to our staff, were staffed by the Legislative Analyst. That also always produced an interesting conflict because Alan Post was frequently worried that we were co-opting his staff. We had a lot of those people who liked working with us. They liked the fact that they felt much more involved with policy. And they were somehow upgraded from pure analyst to policymaker. So frequently they would write our work. They would do our work for us as long as we promised never to give them credit.

SENEY: Because, if I am not mistaken, Alan Post expected his people to be pretty neutral.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. And as members of his staff, then were. I'd read their analyses done for Alan Post's staff; then we would sit down and talk and I realized that they had a great deal more to say which was, "Yes, this all makes sense. The numbers were all there. It's still a ridiculous policy and here's why." So that they would be able to take a kind of policy decision and, I think, during those years appreciated the fact that on the Ways and Means staff we were very interested in not only what the numbers looked

like but what they saw in terms of long-range policy implications.

SENEY: I'm asking about the staff because, of course, one of the many things that Unruh did in terms of changing the legislature was to augment the staff of the committees.

NICHOLS: And that, of course, was my job then, beginning as soon as I left Ways and Means . . .

SENEY: . . . But had you, I guess what I'm trying to get at here is, when you became chief consultant of Ways and Means, did it function any differently really in staff terms than it had, say, five years before?

NICHOLS: Yes, it already was functioning differently because we had by that time the Ford Foundation interns. So that we had one of the Ford interns when I moved upstairs, we got Steven Spellman who is now a major executive in the insurance industry. Steve Spellman came in as our intern. We later got a Professor [Gerald R.] Gerry McDaniel in as an intern on our staff, [Laughter] a man you know. A man named R. Keith Binford who subsequently was out here as Director of Institutional Studies at Sac State [California State University, Sacramento]. And those interns that we got were from Ford Foundation; that had

happened during the year or two before I moved upstairs . . .

SENEY: . . . My understanding is that there are those who trace the staffing of the legislature to these Ford Foundation fellowships and interns . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Ford and Coro [Foundation]. I don't know this history, but you will get it from Margolis if you haven't got it before. But as I recall, Coro fellows preceded the Ford Foundation internship. I think that was the pattern of it. The Coro interns moved to a number of different kinds of institutions. The Ford Foundation interns came in and then were treated like staff. Once they were accepted in the program, then we moved them from committee to committee, just as we would have one of our paid staff employees.

SENEY: Let me, before we go on to talk about the staff, because that really begins when you take over the Assembly Office of Research. Am I right about that?

NICHOLS: Yes, though we created an office; the Assembly Office of Research [was] headed by Les Levine, and I was named to a post called Chief Consultant which hadn't previously existed. Though Legislative Office of Research fell under my

supervision, that is, its director, Les Levine, reported to me, it was a position that had not previously existed and really didn't exist much after I left; then those two offices were merged and it changed its character.

SENEY: When you say chief consultant, do you mean chief consultant to the assembly itself?

NICHOLS: I was chief consultant to the assembly. That was the position I moved to after I left Ways and Means.

SENEY: How long did you serve on Ways and Means?

NICHOLS: Oh, gee, I think for one year. It wasn't much longer than that. I think, in fact, I only went through one legislative session as a consultant to Ways and Means.

SENEY: How did this other job evolve?

NICHOLS: Well, we had begun to talk. Larry Margolis and Jesse, Jack Crose, Bob Crown, [Assemblyman Jerome A.] Jerry Waldie, and others who would get together in the evening after business was over and sit around Jesse's office, had been talking throughout this process about how to increase the collective wisdom of the body. It was obvious to all of us that one of the things we simply had to do was to give the individual member a staff upon whom he, or in one case she, could rely,

independent of the third house, independent of the lobbyists because the legislature had been largely forced to rely on Alan Post's office which as the Legislative Analyst who was religiously neutral and--I didn't mean rigorously, I meant religiously--and . . .

SENEY: . . . He is a very interesting personality . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Wonderful man, one of my, I adore him . . .

SENEY: . . . Talk about him a little bit . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Fascinating, fascinating. I'll just finish that sentence. The other source of information was the highly motivated lobbyists who frequently would tell you the truth. But they would frequently not tell you all the truth.

Alan Post is not of this century. He is a man [who] was probably created in the mind of somebody like Cecil Beaton. He is one of the most elegant and refined gentleman I've ever known in my life. And he is of the eighteenth century or early, maybe early nineteenth. He is a painter of considerable renown, really a remarkably talented artist, married to an artist. She smokes a pipe. And Alan is the most sort of aesthetically pure [person]. One can imagine him in a monastery in the south of France better than

you can in the hurly-burly of the legislative scene. He is, of course, as you know, a very slight man, looked anorectic before there was such a disease. But again it's simply part of his aesthetic persona. When I first got to know him, I kept thinking of the performance of Sam Jaffee as the high lama in "Lost Horizon," the wonderful film of the Hilton novel, because he struck me as the kind of high lama of the legislature. A man whose integrity was so absolutely unquestioned, and that whole office was a function of what was a thoroughly justified faith in Alan Post's integrity. Without that, that office could not have functioned. And with it, you didn't need much else. [Laughter] You just knew that Alan and his two chiefs, and his other chiefs, assistants, had read it and if they'd read it, that was good enough for the legislature. I've known Alan for a long time and know him, I mean, outside the legislature as well and, of course, through the art circles. And saw him, what, a year or so ago, I guess, for the last time. I haven't seen him since. Charming, elegant man.

SENEY: Back to the staff. So as much as you respect Alan Post, the legislature shouldn't have to

depend on him because they really need policy people.

NICHOLS: That's right. And we need people who will respond when we say, "Look, this is what we want to accomplish. Now tell us how to do it." Alan Post's reaction was, "No, you tell me how you're going to do it and I'll tell you whether or not it works. But my job is not to make policy. My job is not to be the lackey of the legislature. It is to keep the legislature out of the hands of its lackeys." But Alan agreed that we didn't have enough. We did not, in fact, have a staff adequate to do the work that needed to be done which is to develop the kinds of arguments and the kind of detailed propositions that ultimately are required in the defense of any argument and certainly arguments as vital as those that the legislature is engaged in.

So the decision had been made to engage in an active recruiting of staff. That meant we needed suddenly a new position. We needed somebody to supervise, to handle the recruitment, to do the hiring, and to be responsible for the direct supervision of the staff apart from that that they would get from their own chair of a

NICHOLS: committee to whom they were primarily responsible. We'd had the experience with the Ford Foundation, the Ford internships. We had a notion, I think, of what we wanted and I think what we thought we wanted--and I think we were right--were people whom we could hire who were much too good for the jobs for which we would hire them. We would pay them an initial salary that would lure them and then we would never raise their salaries and we'd only keep them for two or three years. And then they would have the good sense to go on to the jobs that their talent and training qualified them for.

As you know, the tragic fact is that Alan Post tied his salaries to our salaries and thus was constantly encouraging us to raise our salaries. And there was the natural inertia. You've got a guy who's good and instead of letting him leave, you keep Ron Robie on as, you know, the consultant to the Water Committee because he is a brilliant consultant to the Water Committee and it suddenly doesn't make any sense to let him go and bring in someone new. And that, of course, was the destruction of the staff system. If we had kept to our original plan and had not promoted, not increased salaries, we

would have prevented the kind of bureaucratization, the kind of institutionalization of an expertise which was always limited. You know, [David B.] Dave Doerr¹ should have left the Committee on Tax and Insurance years before he did. I think [Ronald B.] Ron Robie should have left the Water Committee before he did. Indeed, as his own career suggests because when he finally left the legislature and went into private practice as a water attorney and now as a superior court judge, you know, Ron could have done all that years before if we'd just let him go. Dave Doerr could have had a more distinguished career if we'd trained him in the legislature and then kicked him out, or let him train us and then let him go.

SENEY: As a matter of fact, the salaries got to be quite handsome.

NICHOLS: Oh, the salaries were enormous. They were absolutely, wholly unjustified. They're perfectly justified if you say, "Wait a minute. This man had been with us for fifteen years. He deserved to be earning a decent salary. Yes, he does." \$60,000 or \$70,000, I think, is more than

¹David Doerr, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1990-1991 by UCB Oral History Program, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.

it needs to be. But the answer was to let them go.

SENEY: They're closer to \$100,000 at this point.

NICHOLS: I guess that's true, yes. Not that any one of those men is paid an improper salary. I mean those people who do those jobs, having done them for the length of time that they have, deserve the salaries that they're getting. The point is that they shouldn't have stayed around.

SENEY: And that was not the original intent.

NICHOLS: The original plan was that these were all going to be relatively short term appointments.

SENEY: And the reason being that you wanted a turnover.

NICHOLS: We wanted a turnover. We wanted fresh blood. The whole point of doing that was to bring in people who had recently been in the university, who were on, I don't think we used the cliché, "cutting edge," but I can't escape it right at the moment, who knew things we didn't know. You know, we had all fairly recently come out of the universities. We knew what our professors were telling us about the shape of the world. And we also knew that we were losing that month by month by month and that the only way that the legislature, at least that I dreamt of, could stay important would be to continue the ties to

NICHOLS: the sources of new ideas. And the legislature is not the source of new ideas. It is indeed one of the last places that new ideas ever creep in.

We had brilliant minds. You know that list, that original legislative staff; Rose [Elizabeth] Bird did pretty well on the bench for a while [Laughter] and Judge Robie, former Controller Ken Cory, former Assemblyman Ken Cory. Somehow I'm blanking right at the moment just on names. Give me a name and I'll tell you what they're doing, I think. But it really was a distinguished group of people. Larry [Margolis] and I went around the state. We held interviews at the faculty club at Berkeley. We went down to Stanford. We went down to UCLA, to USC. We held on-site interviews. We had lots of people who came up here. We held interviews in Sacramento. And we found after the first round of interviews that we really did have our pick; we were offering some fascinating jobs at very good salaries. And you can get that young attorney out of Boalt [University of California School of Law], you can get that recent Masters Degree in journalism from UCLA. At the kind of salaries we were offering and with an opportunity to make policy, to really

be involved in a place where their work for two or three years could make an enormous difference.

SENEY: Did you use the internship system as a way of looking for and selecting staff as well?

NICHOLS: No. Well. Oh, yes, we did. I mean, that is to say, we frequently offered the Ford interns jobs at the end of their internships. And that was a similar process except that they had applied to the Ford Foundation or applied for the intern program, then they came up for interviews. We selected, Lord, I don't know, maybe one out of five of the applicants, some such number strikes me as right, who we actually offered internships to. Tom Joe, of course, was the most distinguished, and he went from the Ford Foundation intern, to the staff position on Welfare Committee, then to assistant to the Undersecretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and is one of the most brilliant men in America.

SENEY: I understand he has been the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship.

NICHOLS: Is he? Good, good . . .

SENEY: . . . A MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Did you see a change in the assembly pretty quickly with the introduction of this staff?

NICHOLS: Oh, yes.

SENEY: Can you give me a sense of . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Well, one of the most important changes was the impact it had on the third house.

SENEY: The lobbyists.

NICHOLS: Which we hoped it would have on the lobbyists. The best lobbyists found in the staffing pattern the answer to their dream. They now had somebody who would sit and listen to their arguments, who didn't have, as members did, to divide his or her time between five committees and constituents and the rest of the demands. Suddenly there were people, bright men and women, who had time to meet and who needed desperately to understand what the lobbyist's position was. They needed to know whether the lobbyist had facts, give us the complete story, make your best argument, and it will be taken very seriously. Men like [Leslie D.] Les Howe who at that time was the lobbyist for Cal Tax [California Taxpayers Association] who was brilliant, an extraordinary mind, again a man of enormous integrity. And I can recall Les in my office one day, it was five thirty or six o'clock and Les wanted to know if I wanted a drink. And I wasn't finished yet, and he began to laugh. Nobody in this building has ever put work before a drink. The fact is that that was

not me. It was typical of the way staff, at that point, treated their jobs. I needed to know every fragment of Les Howe's argument because Bob was going to ask me, and I was going to have to give Bob Crown a thirty second response. But I couldn't prepare a thirty second response unless I'd had a three hour briefing and Les gave me the three hour briefing. My job then was to provide that royal road to knowledge which is to give quick answers to complicated questions.

[Laughter] But that is what we were there for.

SENEY: Did you find that the legislators reacted positively to the addition of the staff? Were there problems at all?

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. Sure there were problems. There were a number of legislators who treated their offices as if they were KGB headquarters. And anybody who got into their office would suddenly discover secrets that they didn't want anybody to know. And those secrets were either their sexual peccadillos or some under-the-table deal they had going with some constituent or some economic interest. And they didn't trust the staff. They didn't trust that the staff, the men and women whom we placed in that position, would keep their mouths shut. We did. We hired people in those

jobs who understood the legitimate role that secrecy plays in that building. And I mean legitimate role that secrecy plays.

SENEY: Let me see . . .

[End Tape 7, Side A]

[Begin Tape 7, Side B]

NICHOLS: I would say there were not more than two or three that we had to deal with. For a while Tom Bane was unhappy about staff, that was during his time as . . .

SENEY: . . . Let me stop you here. Maybe I shouldn't. Go ahead and tell me what you want to say about Tom Bane first.

NICHOLS: Tom at that time was having an affair with a female member of the legislative staff, of the desk staff, and he was afraid that if the person that was in his office was suddenly one of those bright young eggheads that we'd hired from Berkeley that his sexual escapades would be widely known. Well, come on, Tom. Everyone in the building knew you had a sexual escapade. You know. Finding out first-hand didn't add anything to public knowledge. Nor would anyone go public. What are you going to tell the Bee reporter, that Tom's having an affair? It's too late. The

press already knows that and they don't give a damn.

SENEY: It's very hard to keep that sort of thing secret.

NICHOLS: Everybody kept secrets and everybody knew everybody's secrets.

SENEY: At the time the staff was introduced, the legislator would have his secretary and maybe a district office with a secretary . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes. We were doing that at the same time. The whole funding of district offices came at the same time. And it was almost a quid pro quo. Again Unruh would be the best one to know that or Jerry Waldie. But my memory of it is that we offered them the funding of the district offices almost in exchange for their taking a nonpartisan policy person as their chief of staff. OK, do your politics in your district office, we'll give you an AA [administrative assistant]. We'll give an office allowance for your district office; now your Sacramento office, your capitol office, is going to do the business of the people. Your district office can do the business of your politics and of your reelection. And it was an attempt, a sort of reassurance that your secrets can be kept in your district and up here you do the public's business.

SENEY: This was something then Unruh had to work on the members to get them to accept . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, sure. And in part it did depend upon the behavior of the initial staff. [Assemblyman Joseph M.] Joe Kennick, the assemblyman from Long Beach, an interesting old man, Joe was on Ways and Means and he was chair of the Committee on Mental Health or something like that, Aging, I guess, at any rate, an interesting guy. Kennick had been one of those that hadn't been happy about us, but Joe liked me. We'd gotten on well. We'd had a lot of good conversations. Joe had come to trust me and I think therefore was not too difficult. [Assemblyman] Frank [P.] Belotti, a Republican from Humboldt-Del Norte had been on Rules Committee. Frank was old school. Frank wasn't the least bit sure that he wanted us kids running around. And Frank came around very quickly and decided we were in fact honorable men and women whom he could trust.

SENEY: I think a lot of the popular view is that the legislature simply snapped these people up, were delighted to have them, but you are suggesting that that wasn't the case at all.

NICHOLS: No, no. And in some cases Jesse had to go to his chair that he'd appointed to a committee and say

to them, "You are going to take an intern and here's who it is." In fact, I think and it would be interesting to ask Ron Robie this question, my memory of it is that [Assemblyman] Carley [V.] Porter, the chair of the Water Committee, had not wanted an outsider in his office. He was having an affair with his secretary and he didn't want somebody snooping around. I don't think Carley was making economic deals. He was just making personal deals. But my memory is that he is one of those that Jesse had to say, "Yeah, Carley. You are too going to have an intern and here's who it is. Relax."

SENEY: Were there problems that the staff brought? Were there difficulties that occurred?

NICHOLS: Yes, there's one inevitable difficulty. And I certainly suffered from it too. And I think I've said this before that I suffered from it throughout my time in government. I'd come from a high profile world in which I said what I thought. Now I was in a position where I needed to keep a low profile. If I had a thought, I'd better give it to a member who could then express it because nobody was supposed to know what I thought and certainly no one was supposed to give a damn. We were not there to make public

pronouncements. We were there to provide a very focused education and support system for the member. For someone like me who's an egotist that wasn't always easy to remember.

SENEY: Did that get you in trouble?

NICHOLS: I don't specifically recall my getting in trouble over it, maybe because I was so aware of the likelihood. There were others who got in trouble from time to time. Ken Cory would sometimes announce what we were going to do and his chair would object to the use of the plural pronoun. [Unintelligible] Margolis was forever doing it. Of course, Larry had a somewhat different position, being Jesse's staffman. The "we" was presumed to refer to the speaker's office. Though it often referred to nobody but Larry [Laughter] because Jesse didn't know yet what Larry had planned.

SENEY: Why don't you talk about Larry Margolis because he's a man still involved, I guess, in lobbying at this point.

NICHOLS: Yes, I think so. I think so. I haven't seen Larry for a year, I guess, nearly. But, well, Larry and I had known each other since UCLA days. We were in a class at UCLA as I recall. Larry was at that time Frank Manckiewicz' roommate,

NICHOLS: sharing a house out in the canyon. Larry, you know, I admired his intelligence greatly, one of the people with whom it was simply enormous fun to talk. There wasn't an issue on which Larry didn't have an opinion and about which he wasn't curious, at least issues related to politics. Larry, a fascinating man, he and Frank Manckiewicz were the only people I knew who had learned to speak the way Chaucer wrote and could talk Middle English; it was wonderful fun to sit around and listen to them carry on a conversation in Middle English. Larry, and everyone knows the story, was the unwanted son of a very terribly abusive father; they were living out in the desert, someplace out near Palm Springs. Larry, at one point, to escape his father's physical torture had gone hiding in the hills. His sister would bring him food every night wrapped up in a napkin and go hide it in the hills so Larry would then eat. It was an absolutely horrendous childhood. Larry's enormously powerful intellect allowed him to survive and succeed. But it also, it seems to me, gave him a kind of distrust of the world that I didn't have to suffer from, having a different upbringing. And Larry is one of those who found it difficult to talk about

tactics and strategy with me because I did tend to be this Boy Scout who would say, "No, no. You can't do that. That's not moral. That's not ethical." The conversation would quickly change. [Laughter] The self-appointed priest of their ethics was there listening. Larry was, however, an invaluable member of Jesse's staff. See Marv Holen had been Jesse's consultant when Jesse was chair of Ways and Means. Then Marv went on to use his law degree and to engage in private practice of law. That was the time then that Jesse was moving to speaker and so we hired Larry Margolis to be Jesse's staffman. That was a decision that Marv and I made. Marv and I hired Larry to be Jesse's staffman when I was still in the governor's office. And he went up to Ways and Means so that Marv Holen could leave. Larry went to Ways and Means then Larry and Jesse moved up to--Ha, ha, I should say Jesse and Larry shouldn't I--moved up to the speaker's office. Then I replaced Larry as consultant to Ways and Means.

SENEY: Who were some of the other important staff people during this period?

NICHOLS: Oh, well, Dave Doerr whom we mentioned, Ron Robie. Oh, let's see, move down the halls. It

has been a number of years ago. You mention a committee or a name maybe I can refresh.

SENEY: Let me try a different tack and that is, I think that the staff has come under some criticism and maybe you've made that yourself earlier. That is, it's become too bureaucratized. Did you appreciate the danger of that?

NICHOLS: Oh, yes, we did. You see, Larry and I had gone back to Washington on a trip to interview congressional staff and to try and get a first hand notion of what congressional staffing patterns looked like since we thought that's the one we were imitating. The thing we both came back with, I think, committed to, was the notion that we would avoid the Washington model. We saw the enormous risk of their bureaucratization, the institutionalization of individuals in those positions. We also were seeing at that time on the senate side because of the senate's sort of forever staff person, [Douglas] Doug Gillies, who was the staff to the Senate Finance Committee, the equivalent of [the Assembly] Ways and Means. And to get a bill out of the senate you had to get Doug Gillies' permission. Doug Gillies kept the legislation in a lockbox and we often thought that the chair didn't know or care as long as he

had Doug controlling the legislature. And Doug had been there forever. That's Doug as the Sacramento personification of the evils of the federal system. Added to the impetus that we felt to make the system more fluid, to bring in bright people and then let them go to pursue their own careers, go back to finish their doctorates and teach, or go open their law firms, join a law firm, or do whatever it was they were planning then. I had an image that Ron Robie whose degree at that time was in journalism. [Interruption] My assumption was he would go off and work for the Times.

SENEY: Let me go back to your own situation because you're chief consultant to the assembly. Do you then take over the Assembly Office of Research?

NICHOLS: The Assembly Office of Research was one of my office's functions, though it pre-existed me, of course, by some time.

SENEY: So you were over that. When you left Ways and Mean, you became chief consultant to the assembly and that was a position you held when you left the assembly.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes. What the office of chief consultant had had, I suppose, as its principle purpose, an effort to coordinate the assembly's public policy

NICHOLS: positions. You can't implement a plan unless all the committees are working on it because if it affects Agriculture, it affects Transportation, it may as well, in fact, have a profound impact on things that Finance-Insurance is considering and certainly Government Operations, and obviously Ways and Means. So we tried through the office, excepting that Jesse was the one empowered by the assembly to articulate policy, to try and coordinate the staff so policy could in fact be developed. A number of research projects were directly focused at that level, trying to provide all the staffs and through them all the members with a common sense of what our numbers looked like and what our population growth looked like, of what the economic picture seemed to be, and a way then of saying, "Wait a minute. That bill that seems to be sliding through Agriculture is going to have a profound impact precisely contrary to the thing that we're trying to do in the technology area. Let's get those committees together. Let's get those chairs together. Let's make sure their staffs get together so we can in fact do some coordinating of public policy planning."

SENEY: Would you deal directly with the committee chairs or would you deal with the speaker and have him deal with them?

NICHOLS: It depended greatly on what the issue was, mental health, for example. Jerry Waldie or [Assemblyman Nicholas C.] Nick Petris would be the key person. I never had any difficulty in dealing directly with Nick or with Jerry, a man I admire tremendously. Jerry Waldie's daughter is a student of mine this semester, incidentally. If it involved the Committee on Aging with Joe Kennick I had no problem. If it involved Agriculture, I had no problem. I could certainly always go to [Assemblyman] John [C.] Williamson. There were committee chairs with whom I didn't feel that I had that kind of easy access. In those cases sometimes I would suggest that [it was] maybe something that Larry should do, or something really Jesse would have to handle himself. The stickiest issues are those where good government and the district's interests appear to be in conflict, where you are asking a member to do something which is in his judgment or hers, yes, importantly hers. [Assemblywoman] Pauline [L.] Davis was chair of Fish and Game, and frequently there were issues with Pauline. I

had a pretty good working relationship with her and with her staff. Usually Mrs. Davis and I could sit down and talk about an issue, but there were frequently times with her that I would have to go to Jesse and say, "Look, we're not going to get that bill out of Pauline without your help. Now I've made the good government argument, now you've got to make an argument that convinces her that she can in fact go against what she perceives to be the best interests of either the logging industry or hunting and fishing interests," subjects of great interest to her.

SENEY: You mentioned Bob Crown and Jerry Waldie, and some of the other members; are there any of the other members of the assembly that stand out in your mind for whatever reason?

NICHOLS: Yes. Though I'm just having trouble getting his name, he's still around, importantly, Italian, San Mateo. Oh, heavens. If I saw him, I'd come up with his name. Oh, isn't that weird. [Another was Assemblyman Houston I.] Hugh Flournoy. I was just going through the Republican side for a minute. The men at that time who were, I think, and this is a word that they might not appreciate my using, were nevertheless clearly, unquestionably

intellectuals. That certainly is Petris, certainly Waldie, certainly was Bob [Crown]. And it's funny the way the evenings would turn out when we'd be sitting around Jesse's office who it was that would stay, who would leave. The more metaphysical the conversation [Laughter] grew the fewer remained. But there were also [those], and again I think of Jerry [Waldie], at this moment, who would be there to the end. There was no conversation so esoteric that Jerry didn't seem to enjoy and where he failed to see the relevance. Jesse clearly is a powerful intellectual, saw the world as politics, and so I can't imagine Jesse thinking a conversation extraneous to his interests. Since his interests were as catholic as they possibly could be, everything was relevant. I don't know that the legislature enjoys that luxury any longer, in the finest sense of this, as a kind of club that met. Then they would go off, and some of them would go off and chase women that they weren't married to around Sacramento. Some of them would go off to cheap motels and some of them would go home to their wives. And some of them to men.

SENEY: How long were you in that position? Until 1968.
Am I right?

NICHOLS: Uh-hum. Uh-hum. Now let's see. I moved to that in '63, I assume. [From] '63 to '68, during that period. I interviewed 365 people for jobs my first year in that job. Not surprising I happen to remember the numbers. More interviews than there were days in the year. Served by an incredible secretary, Vivian Miksak, who was an absolutely extraordinary woman who was my secretary and really very effectively my chief of staff though we hired Art Bolton who came in as the assistant chief consultant. Particularly, when we were heavily involved in health issues, we were trying to invent Medi-Cal.

SENEY: You did a lot of research in that area.

NICHOLS: Yes, yes.

SENEY: Health insurance.

NICHOLS: Bolton had been a contract consultant to us on mental health, the area in which he's an expert, working with Jerry Waldie on the Waldie-Petris-Lanterman Mental Health Act.¹ Then we hired Art as my assistant, and then when I left, when I was fired, or was named to my position as chief consultant.

¹"The California Mental Health Act of 1967." A.B. 1220, 1967 Reg. Sess. Cal. Stat., ch. 1667.

SENEY: There were a number of events that occurred in the assembly that were, I think, very important. One was in 1963 a notorious incident when Jesse locked the members up in the assembly. Did you play any part in that at all?

NICHOLS: Well, not really. I don't know how it struck Jesse. It didn't strike any of us certainly or me as the least bit unusual at all. Yes, he locked the members up. But under the rules of the house . . .

SENEY: . . . That was not unusual.

NICHOLS: No, that was not unusual. Normally, however, all it took was the threat and the members complied. But we'd send the Highway Patrol over to--I won't pick a district at the moment--to pick some member up at his house and get him back to the assembly to vote. And he damn well knew if the sergeant or particularly the Highway Patrol in those cases when we had to use the Patrol, he was not going to argue. He was going to come back and vote. We didn't care who he voted for or against. Actually Jesse cared a lot. But the fact is, he was going to do what the law said he had to do. He wasn't going to pretend that he had to go to a Boy Scout dinner that night.

So the rules provide that the members will be held in session until the vote has been taken. There was nothing unusual about it. I don't know--and this very well may have been Jesse who often had a knack for turning a phrase that damaged him--"mother's milk of politics" being the most famous--but it very well may have Jesse who said, "I'll lock 'em up 'til they vote." Or it may have been somebody in the press corps who came up with that phrase. The public reacted as if this was some sort of totalitarian gesture by this man already pictured by the media as a, you know, sort of self-crowned oligarch. But he was simply applying the rules of the house. It didn't strike any of us at the time as the least bit unusual. You know, damn it, yes, good thing to do. Those Republicans won't vote. We'll lock 'em up 'til they do vote.

SENEY: He commented, and others too that things were never really the same after that.

NICHOLS: No, no, they weren't. Certainly it's true that every man and woman in politics is vulnerable to some kinds of charges and invulnerable to others. I said this, I think, before in talking about Pat Brown. It came as such a shock to me to discover that he was an intellectual because he was

NICHOLS: invulnerable to that charge. Adlai Stevenson being accused of being an egghead, certainly one of the things that contributed to his defeats, he thought he was above the common folk in the way his mind works as Thomas Jefferson was, as Jesse Unruh was. But Jesse Unruh was not vulnerable to the charge of being intellectual. He didn't look like an intellectual. He didn't talk like an intellectual. The fact that he thought like the best was immaterial. Jesse was vulnerable to the charge of being a bully. He looked like a bully. He talked like a bully. He walked like a bully. And so he could be accused of being a bully and it would strike that undipped heel of his. As Pat was accused of being a bumbling old fool, so he would do something that was no more bumbling than any governor before or since, God knows. Nobody accuses Pete Wilson of being a bumbling fool. Well, I'll give you bumbling fool in our current governor compared to Pat Brown. And [Assemblyman] Willie [L.] Brown [Jr.], I think, is more the bully than Jesse and yet Willie isn't accused of that. Willie is suspected of stealing. You know, pure racist attitudes toward Willie. Willie's black, therefore Willie must steal. Jesse was a big, lumbering, frightening

hulk from Texas, so we assume he was a bully.
The symbolic nature of that Achilles' heel.

SENEY: You left in 1968. What was the circumstances of your leaving?

NICHOLS: Uhm. Quite interesting, really. The truth, of course, is that I didn't know at all for years. I was sitting at home one evening with my wife and cousins of hers that had come visiting from Israel. And I got a call from Margolis asking me to come over to the house. And I went over to the house and sat on the tailgate of his stationwagon in the driveway and he informed me that I was being fired. It's funny, but this is the second time I had to ask you to believe that I had not seen anything coming. The fact is I had not seen anything coming. I think I was behaving pretty much the same way as I always had. For example, one day, certainly not too long before that, I had to sign the payroll for everybody, and certify that these people were all alive and still worked and so on. I had a payroll that had a name on it that I'd never seen before. I think his name was Bob Moretti. I may be wrong, but it was somebody who was subsequently in the legislature. And I said, "I won't sign a payroll. I don't know who this

NICHOLS: person is." Larry said, "It's OK. It's all right, sign it." And I said, "Larry, no, I won't. I will not sign a payroll with a name on it of somebody whom I don't know. They've got to exist. I've got to see that they have a body. Somebody is going to ask me some day, didn't I know I was signing a payroll for people who didn't exist and the money was going into your pocket. Now you produce a body and I'll sign the payroll." So they had to fly this who-ever-he-was from L.A. to Sacramento, to march him into my office, to prove that he was alive. As soon as he walked in the office, I asked to see his driver's license and he showed it to me and then I signed the payroll. Well, that would have been reason enough to fire me.

I don't think that's why I got fired. I think I got fired because the rumors of my homosexuality were now more than rumors. A couple of incidents had occurred that I am confident got back to Jesse and to Larry. Though I was still trying to maintain my cover, that became both increasingly difficult and, as I matured, became less important to me. You know, by that time I knew two members who were gay, and I knew governor's staff people who were gay. I

was relaxing, [and] wasn't keeping the closet door as tightly shut as I had before. I was propositioned one night by a member of the sergeant-of-arms staff; we propositioned each other. At least, we came on to each other, to use the gay parlance. And I learned just a few days later that he had subsequently reported to another member of the sergeant-of-arms staff that I had propositioned him. That's not how I remembered it, but that's also not important. The fact is that that's what he told another staffer who told Tony Beard, long time sergeant-of-arms, and that got to Jesse. So my assumption is that I was fired because of the possibility that they saw that having a homosexual in a prominent position on Jesse's staff would be damaging in the upcoming gubernatorial campaign. Which didn't happen for another four years or something but anyway, that's what they were thinking at the time.

SENEY: Another two years . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Two years . . .

SENEY: . . . I think two . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Two of the longest years of my life which is why I thought it was four . . .

SENEY: Let me ask you in regards to this. When Governor [Ronald] Reagan came into office in 1966, a man on his staff named Phil Battaglia . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Battaglia . . .

SENEY: . . . Had been found to be homosexual and had this occurred at this time? I'm not 100 percent certain of chronology of . . .

NICHOLS: Yes, it must have. I'm not certain of the chronology either because I don't know quite when that occurred. The two sons of the senator, the Republican senator from Marin, and Phil and Sandy Quinn were up at the cabin owned by Jack Kemp [who was a student at USC at the time] and Phil Battaglia and [Mrs. Ronald] Nancy Reagan's secretary--one of the most dreadful women I've ever known in my life--who was conducting . . .

SENEY: . . . You mean her secretary's dreadful or Nancy Reagan is dreadful . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Well of the two, she is even more dreadful than Nancy. The secretary's name I have forgotten. I would otherwise be happy to use it in the hopes that it would constitute libel and she would sue me and we could go to court and prove she is, in fact, the most awful woman in the world. [Laughter] Gotta be an Oscar Wilde challenge there. But she was conducting her

internal battle in the Reagan office with Battaglia, who could be an authoritarian. He and Larry are an awful lot alike, both in size and .

. . .

SENEY: . . . Larry Margolis . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Larry Margolis. I liked Phil very much.

[Interruption]

She then went up and peeked in the cabin window to prove that they were having an orgy which they were . . .

[End Tape 7, Side B]

[Begin Tape 8, Side A]

NICHOLS: At any rate, during this period, of course, we had the president's press secretary, uh Jennings, what was his name? [President Lyndon B.] Johnson's press secretary?

SENEY: Yes.

NICHOLS: Wonderful old Texas newspaperman.

SENEY: Jenkins, Walter.

NICHOLS: Jenkins. Walter Jenkins. Thank you. Walter Jenkins had been arrested in Washington for propositioning an undercover agent or some policeman or something.

SENEY: In a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], as I recall.

NICHOLS: Was it a Y? OK. I thought it was the bus terminal. But it's immaterial. He was at any rate. He was [G.] Harold Carswell[ed]¹. Then the Battaglia thing in Sacramento. Now as I recall, that's the order of it. That it went from Washington to Sacramento. It may have just as well have been the other way around. But at any rate, men in high places were being revealed. It was therefore a period of fairly high paranoia. Gay men that I knew were all sort of desperately dashing back into the closet to protect themselves. Though both Johnson and Reagan, in fact, handled their situations, I think, very well. Lyndon Johnson came to Jenkins' support and granted him his request to resign but did so without any chest-beating or epithets hurled at his retreating back. And Reagan behaved well too, I think.

SENEY: My understanding is that in the Reagan case that pressure really had to be brought to bear on Reagan to remove Battaglia . . .

NICHOLS: . . . It would be consistent, I think. I don't know. Obviously, I didn't know the inside, because the inside of that staff that I knew was

¹Carswell, U.S. Supreme Court nominee in 1970, arrested in 1976 for soliciting a plainclothesman police officer in Tallahassee, Florida, and fined \$100.]

Sandy Quinn. And Sandy was suddenly no longer privy to information. It was our distinct impression at the time that Reagan and Nancy knew. Both the governor and Mrs. Reagan had really resisted taking any action at all. I think Mrs. Reagan, as I heard the story, really thought that Phil served her husband's needs very well and was accessible to her and that was always very important to her. Very, very important to her, as [Donald T.] Don Regan [President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff] discovered in Washington. At any rate there was a climate of paranoia which we all thought pretty well justified. And, in retrospect, I have been told subsequently that I was fired, that they had to get rid of me because I was gay and I was being indiscreet. I don't think I was being indiscreet but then today I'm never discreet at all so I don't know what indiscretions were like back in the days when I was supposed to be discreet.

SENEY: Now let me just ask you briefly what happened when you left the speaker's office . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Very interesting because I was, when I was informed that I was leaving, I was also informed that I would be taken care of. At some point,

NICHOLS: Larry, I guess, asked me if I would like to move to Berkeley and go to work for Clark Kerr. And at that time it seemed like a very good idea. So I said, "Gee, that sounds fascinating." Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, though I thought his book was stupid. I had great respect for anybody in that job because I respect the institution. A couple of weeks later we were at the annual University of California reception over at the Sutter Club and I was literally being introduced to Clark Kerr for the first time and somebody said, "President Kerr, this is Lee Nichols." And Kerr said, "Oh, you're going to be joining my staff. Welcome aboard." Now I'd never been interviewed by anybody. So I assume that there was a phone call from Jesse to Clark Kerr informing Kerr that I was now on his staff. That never matured and I didn't pursue it with any real interest. Maybe if I'd pushed, I could have. It was not something I really wanted to do. I didn't want to leave Sacramento. I love this town. Moving to Berkeley and working in the administration in the University Hall, or whatever its called, was not really what I wanted to do. Ivan Hinderacher was at that time chancellor of the Riverside campus of the

NICHOLS: University. And Ivan offered me a job as his administrative assistant or some deanship at Riverside. And I toyed with that for a long time, and went down to look at the campus. I went back to Washington and had a couple of interesting things happening back there that I thought I might want to do. I didn't act on any of them. And partly I was in a state of pretty bad depression. Uh, uh. You know, trying to balance a marriage and five children, three children, I guess, then. You know, and worried about how I could maintain this life. How could I live as a gay man and live in the lie of my heterosexual marriage particularly complicated by the fact that I loved my wife deeply, as I do today. And, you know, I'd never been unemployed. I mean, you know, I went to an internship and NBC hired me. Then the governor hired me when I was with NBC. And then Jesse hired me; before I'd managed to get upstairs I already had a job and a new payroll. And suddenly for the first time in my life, at thirty-six or whatever I was, I was out of a job; I was out of work. And in my history I had to do nothing, I just sat there and took the first job offer that came along or the fifth or the tenth. I didn't have to worry. The

Fates had always taken care of me; they would take care of me now. Well, after we'd spent all of our savings bonds and our children's savings bonds and denuded our financial resources, it became pretty apparent that I'd better find a job. I finally took the job out at KVIE, originally working on, just writing some scripts for a special series they were doing, and then went on to become program manager and acting general manager. So I survived during those years, thanks to those people who buy stuff at the KVIE auction.

SENEY: And then you became a faculty member here at California State University, Sacramento in 1970.

. .

NICHOLS: . . . That's right. Gerry McDaniel, whom I'd mentioned had been my intern or staffer, fellow in our office Ways and Means, was at that particular time chair of the Government Department here. And he had offered me part-time teaching during that period and I had taught two or three classes with the Government Department. [William] Bill Dorman and I had team taught the course in political communication. Bill Dorman from journalism and Lee Nichols from out there were offered a chance to team teach that course

which was a wonderful experience, a course that is now a permanent offering in our department. And so I taught for Gerry for two years, I guess. Yes, '68 '69 and then in 1970 was hired full-time here.

SENEY: Let's go back and talk about being gay. It's a fascinating subject and one that has in your lifetime changed a great deal, that is the outlook [toward gays].

NICHOLS: It's an interesting day to talk about it because yesterday [Stanley] Stan Hadden died. Stan Hadden was on Senator David [A.] Roberti's staff
 . . .

SENEY: . . . The Senate pro tem . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Pro tem, the president pro tem. Stan Hadden was in Sacramento in the air force, came out of the air force and out of his closet, went to work for the gay newspaper in town Mom Guess What, and then went to work for the legislature, rose very rapidly . . .

SENEY: . . . Obviously no secret what his sexual orientation was.

NICHOLS: . . . No, in fact, it was his key, I mean, it was the reason he was hired, because David Roberti wanted to reach out to the gay constituency in West Hollywood that he represents. David

Roberti, a very devout Catholic, recognized that he needed somebody on his staff who could overcome the kind of frequently anti-Catholic bias that many gay people have. Stan ended up heading an office, a powerful office, tremendously important office, which was essentially the legislature's office on homosexuality, particularly on AIDS. He founded the Sacramento AIDS Foundation, and died of AIDS yesterday. I just was . . .

SENEY: . . . How old was he?

NICHOLS: Oh, God, late thirties, I guess. I just talked to a friend who informs me that the memorial services, originally planned for December, can not be held until January at the request of the legislature that wishes to be present for the Stan Hadden memorial. Could we please postpone the large formal memorial until after the legislature reconvenes? Now I was fired for being gay in 1968. And now, thank God, the world has turned far enough that the legislature will choose to honor a man by naming A.B. 101 [gay rights bill] next time it's introduced as the Stan Hadden bill. The history of California as it relates to issues pertaining to lesbians and

gays, and certainly of AIDS, is a history that is simply Stan Hadden's biography.

SENEY: You say the next time A.B. 101 will be introduced, that's because Governor [Pete] Wilson vetoed it.

NICHOLS: Yes, Governor Wilson vetoed it in an absolutely mindless effort to make peace with the right wing in his party which, of course, he can't, as Bush had discovered. [Laughter] There is a Pat Buchanan, there is always a Pat Buchanan to represent the right wing, or a David Duke. Wilson's argument for vetoing A.B. 101 which is the legislation to provide legal protection against overt discrimination in employment to gays and lesbians [doesn't work]. His veto statement, message, indicates that he did so because it would be a burden on small business though the California State Chamber of Commerce and the California Manufacturers Association, the California Taxpayers Association were all neutral on the bill. And knowing the lobbyist for each of those organizations well and having spoken to the lobbyist of each of those organizations, they were affirmatively neutral and they'd all let the governor know that their organizations had no

objection to his signing it. The veto message is simply a patent and badly drafted lie.

SENEY: Let me tell you why I bring this up. Not only to mention this here but I think the more interesting fact surrounding this is that on a Sunday night the governor vetoes this, knowing that a California poll will be released on Tuesday dealing with this. I don't know what he thought the poll would say . . .

NICHOLS: . . . But he knew what the results were. He'd already been notified of the results.

SENEY: Well, the results said 62 percent of the people in California thought he should sign the bill.

NICHOLS: That's right. 62 percent think that it is, in fact, OK for lesbians and gays to be gainfully employed. The governor, however, says of that, within that 48 percent there is perhaps half of that, maybe 25 percent, who are sufficiently motivated as anti-gays. These are Republican who would, in fact, extract punishment from the governor, extract penalties for his having caved in to, in this case, the majority of voters, the majority of the people in California, but, of course, to this homosexual minority of which I am proudly one.

SENEY: I can only speculate here, I'm not sure that anyone knows the answer to this, but I suspect that if those gays and lesbians who had voted for Wilson had voted for his opponent Dianne Feinstein [in the 1990 Governor's race], he would not have won.

NICHOLS: Absolutely, certainly, it was very close. It is interesting though, and you have probably seen the story, that several Republicans, gay Republicans, who contributed to his campaign have demanded their money back and have gotten it. Fairly promptly the office is now making refunds. Wouldn't that start an interesting trend in America? Politician doesn't keep his promise; you get a refund.

SENEY: Well, he did promise to sign it [the gay rights bill]. . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, yes . . .

SENEY: . . . Before the election . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, and he promised any number of individuals who talked with him, and, of course, he worked very closely with [Assemblyman] Terry Friedman, who was the author of the bill, working out details. In fact, at the governor's request they took out the nondiscrimination in housing because the governor found it easier to sign it

without that provision. Since we wanted the governor's signature, we were willing to give up freedom of accommodation, for the protection of A.B. 101. No, the world has changed tremendously. Still not changed enough that any of the gay members of the state assembly have come out while . . .

SENEY: . . . I was going to ask you. I know that you have said to me when the tape was off that there are gay members of the assembly. How many are there to your knowledge?

NICHOLS: Four, six. At least, six that are known to each other, that are known, at least, selectively to members of . . .

SENEY: . . . Any members of the senate?

NICHOLS: Yes. Yes.

SENEY: Do you know how many?

NICHOLS: Well, let's see. And I really had included one of those in my first count. There are two gay members in the senate.

SENEY: Five in the assembly.

NICHOLS: Three. Yes, five in the assembly that I can think of.

SENEY: And then the general public understanding is that a prominent member of the governor's own staff is gay.

NICHOLS: Yes, at least, one.

SENEY: And that's no secret. That's widely known.

NICHOLS: Yes. It's widely known. It's . . .

SENEY: . . . And really the governor must know . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Sure, sure. I mean, you know . . .

SENEY: . . . Well, this certainly covers up the category in our context of our conversation about your own employment.

NICHOLS: Uh hum

SENEY: That Phil Battaglia. How things changed . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Yes, true . . .

SENEY: . . . No question about it. But let me go back to your own case if you don't mind. And that's because I'd like to talk to you a little about what it means to be homosexual, what it means to be in politics and in public life and be homosexual. When did you first have an inkling that you were homosexual?

NICHOLS: Well, you know, I knew it, in retrospect, I knew it when I was a very young child because I got this terrible crush on an Indian dancer at a festival.

SENEY: A male dancer.

NICHOLS: A male dancer. I dreamt about him. And it's a fantasy which is now almost fully realized since the man I live with is an American Indian and

also a dancer. [Laughter] A dancer and a carpenter and a million other things that he does. But, uh, in my town, uh and I guess it isn't true of everybody's growing up experience, but in my town . . .

SENEY: We're back in Hawthorne.

NICHOLS: Hawthorne, California. Boys got together and played with each other. Uh, uh, which I guess is not true of everybody, but it was true. But I also knew others who have had similar experience. And then they grew up and they meet girls and then they discover that it's more fun with girls. Well, my friends were all discovering it was more fun with girls when I still thought it was an awful lot more fun with them. And at one point, I'd said to one of the kids who had been in this crowd of guys who sometimes did that. He said, "Oh, grow up, Lee, or what are you, a homo?" And it was the first time that I'd ever thought of the fact that I wasn't going to grow out of this. That I now understood that they were maturing out of this, that their fantasies when if we touched each other, jacked each other off, that their fantasies were of women. My fantasies had never been . . .

SENEY: . . . How old were you at this point?

NICHOLS: Junior high. However old one is in junior high.

SENEY: Thirteen. Fourteen.

NICHOLS: Yeah, and uhm, and that was also the time, as I mentioned in the early part of our interview, the time that I decided to leave Hawthorne schools

NICHOLS: and go to Los Angeles school system. That was part of the reason because I didn't want to continue to be with these guys who knew this secret of me. They knew that I had not grown out of this childish behavior and it was highly unlikely that I ever would. Except for the employment things, I've never really suffered from that. You know, I had friends in high school. I had a friend in junior high, new school, new kid. And, you know, I said something to him, I guess, one day that let him know that I was interested in him physically. It was a strange reaction because he said, "Gee, I don't think I can do that, but it's OK, Lee, it's OK." The first time that I'd ever come out to anybody who was heterosexual, who then in a sense almost apologized to me. And we remained friends. In fact, some years ago he was in Sacramento, holding an important education job. I will not mention his name since I know he's turned out straight. At Dorsey High, and my best friend was

NICHOLS: the quarterback in the football team. He knew I was gay and it didn't bother him. You know, he would prefer that I not announce it to everybody because we were best friends and they'd assume that he was too. But it was no big deal. He didn't demand my secrecy or my silence.

Then I left there and went to Hollywood Professional School where oddly enough I was a little more closeted than I had been at junior high or high school. Because the gay men were much more flamboyant at Hollywood Professional. The gay men were dancers and stuff. And I increasingly discovered that you sort of had to make decisions at some point whether to adopt a kind of more flamboyant advertising presentation, to be as we would say, a flamer or a flaming queen. And I wasn't comfortable with that. I certainly never wanted to be anything but a man. I didn't want the feminization that some of the gay men whom I knew in high school were adopting. So I kind of went back into the closet during that period. I dated girls, and on a couple of occasions I dated girls and then went home with their dates, their boyfriends afterwards. We'd take the girls home then we'd go home. But I

managed to live the kind of double life
throughout high school and . . .

SENEY: . . . Did you think that this was something you
would get over?

NICHOLS: Oh, I think everybody in that era believed it.
And one night as a senior in high school I had my
first sexual intercourse with a woman and it
worked mechanically, and the parts fit, and all
the things that are supposed to happen happened.
I was bored and I indeed had to keep my mind on
something else, on someone else, in order to be
functional, but I discovered that I could do it.
Then my freshman semester at UCLA I had one of
those epiphanies. It turns out to be a false
epiphany. I had a dream and the sexual object in
my dream was a woman, a woman I knew, a girl I
went to high school with. And I really thought
that redemption was now mine. I finally had
achieved that state of being which all my friends
had long since acquired. And a week later the
dream evaporated in the arms of a guy I met on
campus. In my junior year, I met my wife; and
I'd dated another woman or two. Oh, I'd dated a
lot of people in between, but I had sex with a
couple of others. And it was increasingly

comfortable, simply the mechanics of heterosexual intercourse.

And then I met Liz and fell in love. And it was the first time that that emotion had been coupled with a capacity or awareness that I could have a capacity for sexual desire. We had an enormously chaste courtship. We did not have intercourse during the year and a half that we went together before we married. We did some things that were approximate and we, both she and I, discovered that I was capable of responding to her sexually without actually having had intercourse. We married and I cheated on her on our honeymoon with a man. I had no intention to; I'd gone to pick up the newspaper in the morning. I'd left our honeymoon cottage and walked over to buy a paper and the papers were just being inserted into the paper rack by the delivery boy for that town's newspapers, and we exchanged glances and then we got into the cab of his truck. Later I went back to my room devastated. You know, I had not even been able to be faithful to my wife one day.

SENEY: How long was it before she knew that . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Well, she knew before we dated because at UCLA the assumption in our crowd was that I was

NICHOLS: gay. And I'd told Liz, parked up on Mulholland Drive one night, that I'd said, "I love you and isn't it a shame that I'm gay because we'd be great together." And she said, "I don't believe you really are." And since in those years everyone believed that all it took was the love of a good woman and since I loved a good woman, and I don't mean that in a pejorative sense at all, a woman who was a good human being, I believed that that's all it would take. That I'd be visited by some god, whom I didn't even believe in, who would cure me. And then, as I say, learned on the honeymoon that I hadn't been cured.

But she knew, and it was probably a couple of years before she realized that I was still on occasion engaging in sex acts with men. And we made the usual couples' agreement, very common among gay men married to straight women, that we just won't talk about it. And as long as she didn't have to know when or where or with whom, she could live this kind of duplicity that affected our life. She had, of course, no idea how frequent that was. I'm one of thousands and thousands of men who know this from experience, who do, in fact, try to not simply function

mechanically as heterosexuals but to try to become heterosexuals in order to fulfill both their dream of a marriage and out of respect for the woman they love. I knew what a marriage was supposed to be like. I adored my wife and I was gay. And those three elements can not come out to anything except the life of a lie.

SENEY: What do you think a straight person or maybe even a gay person, maybe it's the same thing, should understand about someone in public life who is gay during this period when you've got to keep it a secret?

NICHOLS: Well, you know my hope is that the public at large would behave the way the press corps, the media behaved. You know, they know. I mean, hell, I knew about the gay members of the legislature before I ever got to Sacramento. The first time I ever met former Assemblyman Dennis Mangers, which was after I'd left the legislature, I knew Denny was gay. And everyone in the world must have, I thought, known that. Of course, after he left the legislature, he came out. [He] is now very active in the gay community, so this is not an outing.

SENEY: Do you believe in that by the way?

NICHOLS: An outing? I can understand . . .

SENEY: . . . Which is involuntary . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Sure. To involuntarily reveal someone's else's sexuality. There certainly are circumstances where I think it is totally justified.

SENEY: What would those be?

NICHOLS: Well, if I knew, for example, that [Congressman William E.] Bill Dannemeyer had sex with men, I would out him in thirty seconds . . .

SENEY: . . . An anti-gay member of congress . . .

NICHOLS: . . . Member of the congress. We have had--he's no longer in the legislature--but we had a very homophobic member of the state legislature with whom I'd had sex in the radio studio in the old capitol. And, you know, he finally drank himself out of a job, effectively.

SENEY: Has he been identified as gay?

NICHOLS: No, as far as I know still hasn't, and is still married to the same wife. One has a little suspicion that the longer the marriage of a politician to the same wife, the more likely that politician is to be gay. [Laughter] Since marital fidelity or longevity is not a characteristic of politicians' marriages.

SENEY: I interrupted you. You were answering my question about what a gay or even a straight person should know about what is like . . .

NICHOLS: . . . What I was going to suggest, that I think most people treated it as the press corps, that it is essentially an irrelevancy. But it is an irrelevancy that I think most people in the press corps believe might be of damage and it's an unfair damage. If the guy is stealing from the state treasury, he ought to be exposed. If he is having sex with a consenting adult male, it really isn't going affect his performance as a legislator. You know, there one, two come to mind, members of the legislature that are gay who are distinguished, highly respected for their skill, and for their morality, and for their compassion, and the press corps certainly knows [who they are]. My god, they're not even all that covert. But it's not a story that I would ever expect to see in print until it becomes inescapable as in C.K. McClatchy's case, the publisher of The Sacramento Bee, president of the Bee Corporation.

SENEY: The late C.K. McClatchy.

NICHOLS: You know, I think most people who knew C.K. at all well knew that he was gay, but it was

irrelevant. Now at the time that he died, someone very close to him called the coroner's office--since he died not under medical care, he died of a heart attack--a friend called the coroner's office and said, "You need to take precautions in the autopsy," because C.K. was HIV positive. I think that was the most gracious and considerate thing that a close friend could do. You know, we're not going to put some lab tech at the morgue at risk to protect the late C.K.'s image.

SENEY: Do you think that he was the kind of individual who would mind people knowing now? Because my understanding is, although it was not particularly widely known outside of certain circles while he was alive, it has become widely known. Would he have minded that, do you think?

NICHOLS: I think he would not have minded. And I have a story in particular. He had hired a man who came up to work on the editorial staff for a while who is a prominent Berkeley faculty member. The man threw a party here in Sacramento and I was invited with my lover and we showed up at the party and to my great surprise C.K. was there. There were lots of people there whom he didn't know, that he was meeting for the first time.

These were people in the media, some people from the university, some people from a group here in Sacramento called Pillars, which is a gay men's professional club, a luncheon-dinner club. And there were a lot of people from Pillars there. And I went up to C.K. and greeted him and said, "Nice to see you here." And C.K. said, "Oh, Lee, it's very nice to be here," and gave me a hug. Now C.K. and I had dated a couple of times-- euphemism--back when we were both with our wives.

[End Tape 8, Side A]

[Begin Tape 8, Side B]

SENEY: I think we should go back to the part in which you talk about the Pillars.

NICHOLS: Well, I was just going to say that C.K. McClatchy, I don't know, I don't think he did that very often in Sacramento [appear at a gay function]. You know, and it was a bit of an act of courage because the crowd that C.K. traveled in largely, as a newspaper publisher, was pretty conservative and, I think, might have given him a little difficulty. It could have had some implications for the corporation for which he was responsible. So I don't fault C. K. There was a problem I discussed with him once, because a lot of people on the paper knew that C. K. was gay,

and the Bee never did a very good job covering issues of interest to the gay community, being overly concerned that if they got too sympathetic to gay causes that the implication would be that they were doing so because of their boss. So instead, they continued to use [the word] homosexual long after. . . . Well, not as long as The New York Times, but the Times didn't convert to the word "gay," until the late eighties.

SENEY: That's a word which you would prefer.

NICHOLS: Well, homosexual describes, you know, describes an act and that sort of silly Latin name, Greco-Latin word, it's a bad made-up word. The use of the word gay, and it's not my favorite word, but at least it calls attention to a way of being with other human beings rather than doing it with other human beings. I just came back from a cruise with eighteen gay men. Nobody had sex. I mean this wasn't a homosexual orgy on a cruise ship but we were all gay all the time we were on the cruise. And we were gay when we went shopping in San Diego. We were gay when we went to Ensenada; we weren't homosexual at any point. Two of the men are longtime companions, a longtime couple, and they may have been

homosexual but the rest of us were just gay.

[Laughter]

SENEY: [Laughter] When was it that you publicly disclosed that you were gay?

NICHOLS: Well, uh, . . .

SENEY: . . . And what brought that about?

NICHOLS: The process of coming out always continues. There is no final act of coming out except perhaps in C.K.'s case. Because there are always people who don't know. There are always people who are going to assume if you look like me and you are my age and you are dressed as I dress, the automatic assumption is you must be straight because nobody thinks the other term even in San Francisco.

SENEY: Let me say here that you don't look gay.

NICHOLS: I don't look gay. Yes.

SENEY: The phrase would be.

NICHOLS: Yes, the phrase would be, "I don't look gay." I don't do anything in mannerisms or voice particularly that suggests that, which always has been a bit of a problem because I always have to approach the guy and the guy doesn't approach me because they don't seem to sense that I'm gay. But, uhm, the reasons are complex. Partly it had to do with the fact that a partner and I, a

business partner, were engaged in a marketing plan which was targeting the gay community.

There was a need and we thought we knew how to fill it so we developed a product and had a way of marketing it to the gay community. And suddenly I was being interviewed by television stations and newspapers and stuff and the Johnny Carson show. Johnny Carson made a joke about our product, Wilde's Beer, and . . .

SENEY: . . . After Oscar Wilde . . .

NICHOLS: . . . After Oscar Wilde which was . . .

SENEY: . . . Was it green?

NICHOLS: No, it wasn't, but some wag came up with the idea that you drink your Oscar Wilde out of a Gertrude Stein.

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: At any rate at that point, it became increasingly ludicrous for me to try and remain in the closet. I was already out, had been out to some classes, or, at least, to some students in some of my classes. And I was increasingly burdened by the necessity of trying to live a double life. The children were older, and Liz, my wife, said to me one day, I was going off to do an interview, "I think you ought to take off your ring." Wedding ring. I said I wouldn't, but, at least, I would

keep my hand hidden because as she said, "It's just too complex to try and explain." Liz helped me make that decision, not always without some anger, understandable anger on her part. By that time I was coming out to classes pretty regularly and Liz then said, "Look, the marriage really doesn't make any sense any more." And though we were still actively involved sexually, she suggested that I tell the children which I did. The youngest at that time was eighteen, seventeen. And so I talked to the kids and then moved out, moved into my own apartment. My wife brought me towels for my new apartment that matched the carpets. By that time I was regularly coming out to classes and that's been ten years now.

SENEY: Feel better about that?

NICHOLS: Oh, God, yes. My class in interpersonal communications this morning trying to talk about the notion of self-disclosing acts, of our acts of self-disclosure, and the closets are places where we keep the dirty linen. And then trying to remember the author of that piece of sort of doggerel verse, "a coward dies a thousand deaths, a hero dies but one." If I understand the meaning of that, it is that one is invulnerable

NICHOLS: to the degree that no other can ever know some fact, some truth, to use as a weapon. Well, I have now, I have unilaterally disarmed every enemy that I could possibly have. They are weaponless. Every time I tell the truth, I disempower those who might use that weapon against me. During my years in the closet, in my years in state government, everybody had the power to destroy me. I carried this weapon that I knew at any moment could be used to destroy me and was, twice at least, used in just that way. And if I had had the courage to say, "Hey, wait a minute, did you fire me because I'm gay? Come on. You know. I'll go to the press." Unruh fires top staff man for being gay. "You know, You can't get away with that. Jesse will lose the vote. Come on, now." Now I have the wit. If I'd had the wit then, I could have defended myself successfully, but not probably with a wife at home because that would have been a cruel act to her.

I don't think a day goes by that I don't have a reason specifically to experience the euphoria of freedom. Sitting in the quad today talking to two students who were heterosexual, two straight students, very active in their

fraternities who were doing a presentation in class on the governor's veto on A.B. 101. I was sitting with the two of them and three gay friends, students, male students here. And suddenly we were an important resource to them. We knew things they didn't know. We knew things we were free to talk about. And they were suddenly free to ask questions that they had never been able to ask before. Now they're stronger men. They are freer men than they were before. They'll never hate a homosexual as they might have been able to if they hadn't known other students and faculty whom they respect who are gay. That's my job now. I teach at the university. I teach well, I think, the material, but what I am is much more important than what I say. What I am reaches more students and produces a greater potential good for humanity. Any number of people could teach my classes better, far better than I can, but I get to be a sixty-two year old gay man who is utterly happy with his life. That is what they need to find out.

SENEY: You've been part of the straight world to some extent anyway and now part of the gay world. What are the contrasts?

NICHOLS: The chief difference turns on the notion of the relationships of men. I don't mean that salaciously. One of the terrible problems of being a straight man in American society is that it is so dangerously competitive, that it is so difficult for men, even men who work together and actually care for each other, to help each other, to offer just the kind collegial support that our colleagues sometimes need in whatever business this may be. Men don't talk to other men well. You know, you sit at a straight bar, and listen to the guys at the bar talking. And they're going to talk about football games. They're going to talk about chicks they've laid. They're going to play liar's dice; they're playing liar all the time. But any discussion of how they're feeling, of problems in their relationships, of concerns about their soul are for most heterosexual men off limits. I went one night recently with some friends, students of mine, in fact, we went from a gay bar, Faces, to a straight bar because I was trying to get them to see this very point. And we sat at the bar and had a drink in this gay bar and then we went the bar, the straight bar, and we sat and had a drink.

SENEY: These were gay friends you were with?

NICHOLS: These were straight students. No, straight male students. So after twenty minutes at the straight bar and these were all very straight guys, twenty minutes at the straight bar, they left their beers to go back to the gay bar because the men weren't putting each other down. They were engaging in real conversations. They were talking not about sex, not about getting laid, they were talking about ideas. The line from one of my students was, "God, the gay bar's a lot more grown-up." And that difference exists. The nature of the competition in our society between men, I think, heterosexual men, is enormously destructive. Part of that is gone when every other man is, at least at some level, is in some sense a potential partner.

[Interruption]

So everybody is coming at everybody which is totally different.

SENEY: Something else I want you to comment on for me, that is the sense of humor.

NICHOLS: Uh-huh.

SENEY: I have something in mind here.

NICHOLS: The difference between gay and straight humor, you mean.

SENEY: Yes. Right. Exactly. The kind of humor you'd find in this gay bar or when gays get together.

NICHOLS: Well, gay humor tends to be self-deprecating. We tend, I think, to make fun of ourselves and the characteristics of the community that are depicted in others. I think of the wonderful line of Paul Lynde's, the late gay actor-comedian. On Hollywood Squares one time, the question was, "Why do motorcycle drivers wear leather?" And Paul Lynde's response in that ever so gay voice of his was, "But because taffeta wrinkles so dreadfully."

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: Now that's a typically gay joke. And it is benign. No one is hurt by that kind of humor. I think gay humor tends not to be the Don Rickles kind of put-down humor. Not to say that we don't frequently dip our tongues in acid. But we are, I suppose, as a minority, as a stigmatized group in society, aware of the pain of that stigma and know that the only thing you can do to deal with it is to turn it, and is to do what we call camp, to exaggerate not our idea of what it is to be gay but the heterosexual community's of what it is to be gay. So in class today somebody admired this new leather jacket I was wearing, so at that

NICHOLS: point I put my hand on my hips and I did a little pirouette. Now I wouldn't act like that except that it is a way of saying to the class, "Yes, this is who I am. I'm proud of who I am. I don't want you for a moment to forget." So I camped. You know, I did a little campy turn. And then I think however unfunny, well, it got a good laugh in class. But whether it's funny or not isn't as important as typically it is an illustration of the notion that we laugh first at ourselves and we laugh at our indiscretions. We laugh at how quickly we fall in love and out of love. We laugh at our excessive concern with whether or not our hair is well combed and do our socks match our tie or whatever. And I think, and again having just come back from this cruise with these guys, that that's the kind of humor that we shared. So that one of the guys came down in the morning looking quite bleary eyed and the line was, "Oh, well, she must have slept on her ear." Now I don't know what that really means but it was the delivery that, you know, the feminized lisp, the affectation of the effeminate gay that we will use among ourselves in the same way the blacks, African-Americans in those years would use their own, you know, very racist put-

downs which is the special privilege of any minority. And the power that you can gain from finding humor in that and for being able to look at ourselves as if from the majority's perspective and find in the very things for which we may be despised something charming, something pleasant, something worth laughing at rather than crying over.

SENEY: Is there is a lot of humor, a lot of laughter among gays?

NICHOLS: No, I don't think so. The closet is a wonderful place to learn comedy. [Laughter] You know, if comedy turns on the notion of the surprise, of the unexpected, and therefore that the one who would make the joke has to be of two minds. They have to be able to get into the story as if they were going to have some logical ending, "Who was that lady I saw you with last night?" Now to deliver that line and its hoary old punchline, you have to be of two minds. You have to know how you are going to set the joke up in order to come in with the punchline. Well, we've been living two lives, at least the closet group, forever. So we are always carrying on two conversations at the same time. So, you know, it would make sense that we've been in rehearsal for

comedy ever since we were first aware that we were gay.

SENEY: Let me shift the subject from something that is funny to something that is not funny at all, and that's the great pall that hangs over not only the gay community but really the world, and that's the AIDS epidemic.

NICHOLS: History will write of this period, I think, that this was, worldwide, the holocaust for gays. And other historians will say that that's not fair. An awful lot of HIV drug users, an awful lot of heterosexual third-world people died. What right have you to claim this plague as your holocaust? A lot of gypsies, a lot of criminals, a lot of homosexuals died in the concentration camps of Hitler's Germany. But it is not the gypsy holocaust. It is not the gay holocaust. It is the Jews' holocaust. So as they have an absolute right to claim that horror as theirs, we have a right to claim this horror as ours. And it will make a profound difference in the history of the world after. I've been trying to work at a book called America after AIDS which is an attempt to take a look at disease as a social system, to draw some parallels between syphilis and leprosy

and tuberculosis and the period in which those were similarly stigmatized diseases.

[Interruption]

NICHOLS: Where were we?

SENEY: And other diseases like syphilis.

NICHOLS: Syphilis, tuberculosis, leprosy, obviously, these were great plagues. Indeed, the disease of leprosy gives our word now, our language the word leper, the one who is scorned, the one who is banished. Leprosy is a treatable disease. Tuberculosis in earlier time meant isolation. We sent them to concentration camps called sanitarium. What would Thomas Mann have written about if there hadn't have been tuberculosis. Syphilis until World War II was a disease which, if you remember the film, "Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet," Edward G. Robinson starring, the time that Erlich found the cause and, subsequently, the cure for syphilis. As the cure was subsequently found, the social stigma of that disease was lifted. When, and it is when and not if, AIDS is controlled by medical science, the legacy of compassion will not disappear. It is that legacy of compassion that the world feels toward those who suffer which will remain. The lives, the uncounted lives, that we've lost to

AIDS are not in vain. And I don't mean that simply as an act of faith; I mean that as somebody who has done some focused work on the social history of the disease. The rejoicing of the gay community--which the lesbians will share fully as they have shared the work of this pandemic fully with us, indeed they have been the leaders in the battle to provide social services and support for gay men--the euphoria will be shared by an awful lot of heterosexuals who are going to feel, I think, no, I'm sure, that we have suffered enough and that the social stigma too must be lifted just as the disease has been lifted from us. In the meantime, until that time, all we can hope for is that strong and noble men like [Ervin] Magic Johnson and others [who have the HIV virus] will speak out, that this will have the effect of forcing greater concentration on care and treatment, and on research, to research the five vaccines in trial now, any one of which may prove to be the way of stopping the disease. And in the meantime as today I've lost my friend Stan Hadden so I will lose other friends.

SENEY: Forgive me, but I must ask. Have you been tested?

NICHOLS: Oh, yes. I've been tested three times. I am HIV negative and will continue to be.

SENEY: Why do you say that?

NICHOLS: Well, this is a little graphic, but my, my operational translation of what it means to be gay does not include the behaviors that are most apt to result in a transmission of the virus.

SENEY: Sort of automatic safe sex.

NICHOLS: Yes . . .

SENEY: . . . For whatever reason . . .

NICHOLS: . . . For whatever reason. Long before I had any notion of what sex were safe or unsafe, it's just not what I prefer to do, so I don't. So I don't run that risk. I have been over the years, obviously, as promiscuous--promiscuity is having sex as often as somebody else wishes that they could.

SENEY: [Laughter]

NICHOLS: You know, I sit and listen to my straight college men talk about their sex lives. They're not accused of being promiscuous. They're accused of being studs. Yes, they are being men. They're doing it. The [problem] is, of course, not promiscuity, it is a virus. One does not catch AIDS from promiscuity; one catches it from a virus. One can have safe sex with a thousand

men, and be at no risk at all. Or one can have unsafe sex as with a friend of mine who was raped one night by a date, a man he was with, and it was the only unsafe sex he ever had and he is now HIV positive.

SENEY: Well, your point is an interesting one, the analogy with syphilis that once the cure was made available the stigma is released. That's an interesting and thoughtful point.

NICHOLS: You recall, certainly, in your youth when no one died of cancer. There was never an obituary that identified cancer as a cause of death. Cancer was a disease of the unclean as tuberculosis was a disease of the unclean. Syphilis was a disease of the unclean, and clearly leprosy was. My God, otherwise Jesus's care of the leper wouldn't make any sense if you didn't understand that leprosy was a disease that stigmatized its victim in ways that went far beyond disease. It defined the victim as immoral. People were guilty of leprosy. As today people are guilty of AIDS, people were guilty of cancer, people were guilty of having tuberculosis. Today, thank God, one is no longer guilty of having a disease except AIDS. One is still guilty of having AIDS. Of course, one is guilty of having alcoholism, too, but AIDS

is clearly different since its transmission mode is different.

SENEY: Well, I'm finished with all the questions I wanted to ask. Is there anything you'd like to add?

NICHOLS: Except that I've had a wonderful time.

SENEY: Well, I've enjoyed it too. And I want to thank you on behalf of the Archives for being willing to take part in our project.

NICHOLS: I'm glad that I did.

SENEY: To add to the historical record . . .

NICHOLS: [Laughter]

SENEY: Especially this aspect of it. I appreciate it very much.

NICHOLS: I wish this were five years from now when the members of the legislature who are gay will probably run on that platform but . . .

SENEY: . . . Well, we'll wait and see; perhaps you're right.

NICHOLS: Well, we'll certainly get a candidate out of West Hollywood or Castro again very soon. Maybe in this very next race, there's a possibility that [Assemblyman] John Burton may lose to a gay.

SENEY: Well, thank you, Lee, very much.

NICHOLS: Thank you, Don. It's been fun.

[End of Tape 8, Side B]

NAMES LIST

State Government Oral History Program

Interviewee Leland L. Nichols

List Compiler/Editor Donald B. Seney

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

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Edward M. Kennedy	Member, United States Senate, 1982-to date	<u>Who's Who in America</u> Vol. I, 47th Ed., 1992-1993.	96
Stewart Symington	Member, United States Senate	<u>New York Times</u> , November 4, 1970, p. 35.	96
James Symington	Son of Stuart Symington	<u>National Cyclopedia of American Biography</u> , Vol. 80, p. 217.	96
Victor Moore	Actor		98
Edmund G. Brown, Sr.	Governor of California, 1959-1967	Driscoll and White, <u>List</u> . [Cited as Pat Brown in the rest of the Names List]	102
Alfred Heller	Member, Board of Regents, University of California	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , May 24, 1972, p. 4.	103
Eleanor Heller	Wife of Alfred Heller	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , July 21, 1975, Sec. II, p. 1.	103
Kathleen Brown	Daughter of Pat Brown and Treasurer of California, 1990 to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List</u> .	108
Bernice Layne Brown	Wife of Governor Pat Brown	Roger Rapoport, <u>California Dreaming</u> (Berkeley, 1982).	108
Margaret Truman	Daughter of United States President Harry S. Truman		109
George McClain	Candidate in California Presidential Primary 1960	Theodore H. White, <u>The Making of the President, 1960</u> (New York, 1961).	110

Peter B. Wilson	Governor of California, 1991 to date	<u>Driscoll and White, List.</u>	111
Frederick G. Dutton	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , May 20, 1972, Sec. II, p. 1.	111
Hale Champion	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , August 20, 1973, Sec. II, p. 7.	112
Warren Christopher	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , January 22, 1975, Sec. I, p. 1.	112
Frank A. Chambers	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , July 1, 1972, Sec. I, p. 24.	112
Richard G. Tuck	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	<u>New York Times</u> , October 9, 1962, p. 28.	113
Art Hoppe	Columnist, <u>San Francisco Chronicle</u>	<u>San Francisco Chronicle</u>	113
J. Edgar Hoover	Director, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], 1921-1972		117
William F. Knowland	Member, United States Senate, 1945-1959	<u>Driscoll and White, List.</u>	119
Nelson Rockefeller	Candidate for Republican Nomination for President, 1960	<u>New York Times</u> , November 4, 1970, p. 1.	120
Kenneth Keating	Member, United States Senate,	<u>New York Times</u> , March 23, 1970, p. 3.	121
A. Phillip Randolph	Civil rights leader	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , May 28, 1973, Sec. II, p. 7.	121
Roy Wilkins	Civil rights leader	<u>New York Times</u> , April 3, 1970, p. 4	121

Ralph Abernathy	Civil rights leader	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , March 22, 1972, Sec. I, p. 1.	121
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Civil rights leader	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , April 5, 1972, Sec. I, p. 4.	121
Henry Kissinger	United States Secretary of State, 1971-1978	<u>Who's Who in America</u> Vol. I, 47th Ed. 1992-1993.	123
Gerald R. Ford	President of the United States, 1974-1977		124
George H. W. Bush	President of the United States, 1989-1993		126
Edward R. Murrow	CBS News Reporter	Edward R. Murrow. <u>This I Believe</u> (New York, 1954).	126
Sander Vanocur	NBC News Reporter	<u>New York Times</u> , April 26, 1960.	128
Stanley Mosk	Associate Justice, California State Supreme Court, 1964 to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List</u> .	130
John F. Burby	Press Secretary to Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr.	John F. Burby, Oral History Interview conducted in 1988 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.	132
Alexander Pope	Legislative Secretary to Governor Pat Brown	John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.	133
Steve Allen	Entertainer		134
Audrey Meadows	Entertainer		134

Jayne Meadows	Entertainer and wife of Steve Allen		134
Mercedes McCambridge	Actress		134
Dwight D. Eisenhower	President of the United States, 1953-1961		142
Richard J. Daley	Mayor of Chicago, Illinois	Edward J. Barfield, <u>Political Influence</u> (Glencoe, Ill., 1964).	143
Franklin D. Roosevelt	President of the United States, 1933-1945		143
Carmine DeSapio	New York City Democratic leader	Robert Cero, <u>The Powerbroker</u> (New York, 1974).	145
Caryl Chessman	California convict executed in 1960	Edmund G. Brown. <u>Public Justice, Private Mercy</u> , (New York, 1989).	148
Cecil Poole	Clemency Secretary to Governor Pat Brown	See Above	148
Marie Champion	Wife of Hale Champion	Leland L. Nichols	152
John Sununu	Chief of Staff to President George Bush, 1989-1992		154
Sherman Adams	Chief of Staff to President Dwight D. Eisenhower		154
Frank Mesple	Legislative aide to Governor Pat Brown Brown, Jr.	Paul J. Lunardi, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1989 by Donald B. Seney, Oral History Program, California State University for California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.	155

Richard Darmon	Director, United States Office of Budget & Management, 1989-1993.		156
Hugh M. Burns	Member, California State Senate, 1943-1970	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	158
Robert W. Crown	Member, California State Assembly, 1957-1973	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	158
Paul Ward	Aide to Governor Pat Brown	Paul J. Lunardi, Oral History Interview.	159
Thomas M. Rees	Member, United States House of Representatives, 1966-1977	Thomas M. Rees, Oral History Interview, Conducted in 1988 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Government Oral History Project.	159
Elmer Peterson	NBC Reporter		162
Ernest Hemingway	Author		163
Sherrill Luke	Staff aide to Governor Pat Brown	Leland L. Nichols	166
Thurgood Marshall	Associate Justice United States Supreme Court, 1967-1991.	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , June 26, 1991, p. 1.	167
Augustus Hawkins	Member, California State Assembly, 1935-1962	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	168
Franklin Williams	Leader, California black community and San Francisco lawyer	Unable to verify	168
May Bonnell	Appointment Secretary to Governor Pat Brown		168
Dick Carpenter	Lobbyist, California League of Cities	Dennis E. Carpenter, Carpenter, Zennech &	171

Associates, Sacramento

Lois Burby	Wife of Jack Burby	John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.	171
Bea Smith	Head, secretarial pool, administrative office of Governor Pat Brown		174
Fred Jordan	Associate Press Secretary for Governor Pat Brown	John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.	174
Richard Cline	Member, Governor Pat Brown's staff	Leland L. Nichols	178
Roy Heatly	NBC News Reporter	Unable to verify	179
Bill Stout	CBS News Reporter		180
Earl C. Behrens	Dean, Press Corps Sacramento, California	John F. Burby, Oral History Interview.	182
William Randolph Hearst	Publisher, Hearst Newspapers	<u>San Francisco Examiner</u>	186
John Vasconcellos	Member, California State Assembly, 1967-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	192
Dan Luevano	Deputy Director of Finance, State of California, 1962	Larry Margolis, Oral History Interview.	196
Ronald G. Cameron	Member, California State Senate, 1959-1963	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	198
Robert Gordon Sproul	President of the University of California	<u>Los Angeles Times</u> , September 11, 1975, Sec. I, p. 1.	200
Joseph R. Knowland	Publisher, <u>Oakland Tribune</u>	Walton Bean. <u>California</u> (New York, 1973).	200
Frank Chambers	Democrat in San Francisco politics	Leland H. Nichols	203

James R. Mills	Member, California State Senate, 1967-1982	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	203
Ralph M. Brown	Member, California Assembly, 1943-1961	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	207
Tom Bane	Member, California Assembly, 1959-1964 and 1975-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	210
Ken Cory	Staff Assistant, Assembly Ways and Means Committee	James R. Mills. <u>Disorderly House</u> (Berkeley, Ca. 1987).	213
A. Alan Post	Legislative Analyst 1949-1972	Michael J. Ross. <u>California</u> (Pacific Grove, CA., 1992).	215
Lou Angelo	Staff Assistant, Assembly Ways and Means Committee	Larry Margolis, Oral History Interview.	215
Steven Spellman	Ford Foundation Intern to California State Assembly	Leland L. Nichols	217
Gerald R. McDaniel	Ford Foundation Intern to California State Assembly	Leland L. Nichols	217
R. Keith Binford	Ford Foundation Intern to California State Assembly	Leland L. Nichols	217
Les Levine	Head, State Assembly Office of Research	Larry Margolis, Oral History Interview.	218
Jack Crose	Press Secretary to Jesse Unruh	Larry Margolis, Oral History Interview.	219
Jerome A. Waldie	Member, California State Assembly, 1959-1966	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	219
Cecil Beaton	<u>San Francisco Chronicle</u> columnist	<u>San Francisco Chronicle</u>	220
Sam Jaffee	Actor		221

Ronald B. Robie	Consultant to the Assembly Water Committee	Honorable Ronald Robie, Judge of Superior Court, Sacramento, CA.	223
David R. Doerr	Consultant, Assembly Committee on Tax and Insurance	David R. Doerr, Oral History Interview, conducted in 1990-91, Regional Oral History Office, UCB, for the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Project.	224
Rose Elizabeth Bird	Chief Justice, California State Supreme Court	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	226
Tom Joe	Consultant, Assembly Welfare Committee	Eugene A. Chappie, Oral History Interview.	226
Leslie D. Howe	Lobbyist, California Taxpayers Assoc., 1959-1961	Leslie D. Howe, Sacramento, CA	228
Joseph M. Kennick	Member, California State Assembly, 1959-1966	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	232
Frank P. Belotti	Member, California State Assembly, 1951-1972	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	232
Carley V. Porter	Member, California State Assembly, 1949-1972	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	233
Douglas Gillies	Consultant, Senate Finance Committee	Leland L. Nichols	233
Nicholas C. Petris	Member, California State Assembly, 1959-1966; Member, California State Senate, 1967-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	240
John C. Williamson	Member, California State Assembly, 1959-1966	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	240

Pauline L. Davis	Member, California State Assembly, 1953-1976	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	240
Houston I. Flournoy	Member, California State Assembly, 1961-1966	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	241
Vivian Miksac	Secretary to Leland Nichols	Leland L. Nichols	243
Art Bolton	Assistant Chief Consultant to California Assembly	Leland L. Nichols	243
Thomas Jefferson	Third President of the United States		246
Willie L. Brown	Member, California State Assembly, 1965-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	246
Bob Moretti	Member, California State Assembly, 1965-1974	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	247
Tony Beard	Sergeant-at-Arms, California State Assembly, 1956-1977		249
Nancy Reagan	Wife of Ronald Reagan		250
Oscar Wilde	Author-playwright		250
Walter Jenkins	Aide to Lyndon B. Johnson	Howard B. Forer, ed., Lyndon B. Johnson, <u>Chronology</u> (Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1971).	251
G. Harold Carswell	President Nixon's nominee for Supreme Court in 1970; rejected.		252
Donald T. Regan	Chief of Staff to President Ronald Reagan, 1985-1988	Donald T. Regan, <u>For The Record</u> (San Diego, 1988).	253
Clark Kerr	President, University of California	Walton Bean, <u>California</u>	254

(New York, 1968).

Ivan Hinderacher	Chancellor, University of California, Riverside	Ivan Hinderacher and David Farrelly, (New York, 1951).	254
William Dorman	Professor of Journalism, California State University, Sacramento	Faculty Staff Directory, CSUS	256
Stanley Hadden	Staff aide to State Senator David A. Roberti	<u>Sacramento Bee</u> January 11, 1992, Sec. II, p. 7	257
David A. Roberti	Member, California State Senate, 1971-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	257
Pat Buchanan	Candidate for Republican Party nomination of President, 1992	<u>New York Times</u> , October 19, 1992	259
David Duke	Right wing political activist		259
Dianne Feinstein	California gubernatorial candidate 1990; Member, United States Senate, 1992-to date.		261
Terry Friedman	Member, California State Assembly	Office of State Assembly, Sacramento	261
Dennis Mangers	Member, California State Assembly, 1971-1980		270
William E. Dannemeyer	Member, U.S. House of Representatives, 1979-1993	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	271
C. K. McClatchy	Publisher of the <u>Sacramento Bee</u>	<u>Sacramento Bee</u>	272
Johnny Carson	TV host		277
Paul Lynde	Actor		287

Don Rickles	Comedian		283
Thomas Mann	Author		287
Edward G. Robinson	Actor		287
Ervin "Magic" Johnson	Athlete		288
John Burton	Member, California State Assembly, 1965-1974 and 1988-to date	Driscoll and White, <u>List.</u>	291