

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

LEISA G. BRONSON

Democratic National Committeewoman
Democratic State Central Committee
Democratic Party Politics

September 28 and October 4, 1989
Pomona, California

By Enid Hart Douglass
Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School

CALIFORNIA WOMEN AND PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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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.



LEISA G. BRONSON

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Interview Time and Place

September 28, 1989
Mrs. Bronson's home, Pomona, California
Morning Session of 1 1/2 hours

October 4, 1989
Mrs. Bronson's home, Pomona, California
Morning Session of 1 1/2 hours

Editing

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

On November 13, 1989, the edited transcript was forwarded to Leisa G. Bronson, who made only minor emendations and added some additional information in writing. She returned the approved manuscript November 29, 1989.

The interviewer/editor prepared the introductory materials.

Papers

Leisa G. Bronson holds miscellaneous papers in her home.

Tapes and Interview Records

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

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Leisa Graeme Bronson was born on January 3, 1899 in St. Paul, Minnesota. She attended elementary schools in both St. Paul and Pasadena, California, as her family usually spent winters in southern California. Her father died when she was a year old. Her mother's family owned a successful wholesale hardware business in St. Paul. Her mother relocated to Detroit in order to be near her sister, and Leisa Bronson went to the Liggett School, graduating in 1916. Influenced by her aunt, Leisa Bronson enrolled at Vassar College and earned a bachelor's degree in English, graduating in 1921.

Leisa Bronson then married in 1922 and moved to Columbus, Ohio. While raising three daughters, Mrs. Bronson worked for several volunteer groups. She was on the board of directors of the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], eventually becoming the state public affairs chairman in the organization. She was also active in the League of Women Voters as president of the Franklin County chapter and was instrumental in the passage of legislation restricting the use of child labor in Ohio. In the meantime, Leisa Bronson and her husband attended night law school at the Franklin College of Law. She was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1935.

Later that year, Mrs. Bronson moved to California because of the poor health of her mother. She became civically active again and was the charter president of the Pomona Valley League of Women Voters and served as state public affairs chairman for the California YWCA. While attending the national YWCA convention in Philadelphia, Gladys Tillet, the head of the women's division of the Democratic party, urged Mrs. Bronson to become involved in partisan politics. After finishing her term as president of the local chapter for the League of Women Voters, Mrs. Bronson worked on Congressman Jerry Voorhis' 1939 campaign as a precinct worker.

During World War II, Mrs. Bronson worked on the staff of the Library of Congress and eventually became an economic analyst in the Legislative Reference Service. In 1944, Mrs. Bronson temporarily left the Library of Congress to work on labor issues for Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential campaign. She returned to the Library of Congress in 1947 and when her daughters finished their college education in the East, Mrs. Bronson moved to California.

Upon returning to California, Mrs. Bronson resumed her activity in Democratic politics, first working on Stephen Zetterberg's unsuccessful congressional campaign in 1948. She was appointed congressional vice chairwoman for the Los Angeles County Committee for the Democratic party. In 1950, she was appointed vice chairwoman of the state central committee.

Mrs. Bronson moved to Sedona, Arizona in 1952, intending to make a break from politics, but she began to organize the Democrats in Yavapai County. Her efforts earned her a nomination for national committeewoman from Arizona, and she was elected to that position at the state convention. Mrs. Bronson attended three Democratic national conventions and was a member of the platform committee in 1960. Mrs. Bronson also was the first national committeewoman west of the Mississippi River to endorse John F. Kennedy for president. When her term as national committeewoman expired, Mrs. Bronson was appointed a field solicitor for the U.S. Department of Interior, working for the Bureau of Land Management on Indian affairs.

Mrs. Bronson returned to California in 1962 and opened an out-of-print book business in Claremont, where she now lives in retirement. She is the author of an article on the Yavapai Indians and wrote "Cowmen on the Verde," published in the Journal of Arizona History (Autumn 1978).

[Session 1, September 28, 1989]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

DOUGLASS: You were born in St. Paul, Minnesota on January 3, 1899.

BRONSON: That's right.

DOUGLASS: I wondered why your family happened to be in St. Paul at that time.

BRONSON: They moved there. Originally, the family lived on the eastern coast of Maryland. One branch of the family moved West. First to Pittsburgh and then to St. Paul. My great-grandfather started a wholesale hardware business there.

DOUGLASS: Was it your father's family?

BRONSON: It was my mother's family. My father was English and became a naturalized citizen before I was born.

DOUGLASS: Did you go to elementary school in St. Paul?

BRONSON: Yes. I did. I also went to elementary school in California a number of times because the

family usually came to California after Christmas to avoid the long, cold winter. So I went to private school wherever they happened to be.

DOUGLASS: Where would they go? Can you name a few places?

BRONSON: They usually came to Pasadena in the winter and stayed sometimes at a hotel and sometimes at more like a boarding house.

DOUGLASS: It sounds as though your family were of some means to be able to have that kind of mobility.

BRONSON: I think that is true. The business was successful. My great-grandfather started the business and then my grandfather continued. He was the president.

DOUGLASS: I noticed that you graduated from Liggett School, which was a high school in Detroit. I wondered why you happened to go to Detroit?

BRONSON: There were four of us in the family. My grandparents, my mother, and my aunt, because my father died when I was a year old. My aunt later married and was living outside of Detroit. And my mother followed her and had a house next door. By that time, my grandparents had died.

DOUGLASS: I see. Was that a private high school?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What caused you to go to Vassar College?

BRONSON: My aunt had gone there. I had always heard about it all my life. That seemed like the natural place to go.

DOUGLASS: Did you like Vassar?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. That was a very happy time in my life.

DOUGLASS: You were, I believe, an English major. Is that right?

BRONSON: Yes. I majored in English, and my minor was economics.

DOUGLASS: Did you like studying?

BRONSON: Well, I liked it when I was at college. I was not terribly interested in it before I went to college, but I always had good grades.

DOUGLASS: You said that your aunt had gone to college. Was your mother a college graduate?

BRONSON: No. She never went to college. In fact, she never went beyond the seventh grade because of her poor health. But I would not call her an uneducated person. She read a great deal and educated herself.

DOUGLASS: How about your father?

BRONSON: I never knew him because he died when I was a year old.

DOUGLASS: But do you know about his education?

BRONSON: I know that he was a Shakespeare scholar.

DOUGLASS: He was interested in scholarly things.

BRONSON: Yes. But I don't know anything about his education.

DOUGLASS: Did you have brothers and sisters?

BRONSON: No. I was the only child. My mother did not remarry.

DOUGLASS: What was your plan after you finished Vassar?

BRONSON: I had expected to go into the field of dramatics because I had been in a lot of the plays at college. I had written a couple of one-act plays. In the English courses, I took a lot of drama courses. I had an offer, as a matter of fact, from a large high school in Cleveland, Ohio to come there to take charge of their dramatic program. But my mother was in California, and she was not well. So I did not accept that.

DOUGLASS: What did you do then?

BRONSON: I was at home for a while, and then I got married.

DOUGLASS: Home was where in California?

BRONSON: Pasadena, at that time.

DOUGLASS: You were married in 1922. Did you go to live in Detroit then?

BRONSON: No. We lived in Columbus, Ohio.

DOUGLASS: You were probably busy for a while raising three daughters.

BRONSON: Yes. I was. But I was active in various organizations, also. I had some help at home.

DOUGLASS: I don't think I picked up why you were in Ohio. Was your husband living in Ohio?

BRONSON: Yes. That was where he lived.

DOUGLASS: Was he in the paper business?

BRONSON: Yes. Wholesale paper.

DOUGLASS: How did you first get in volunteer activity? I think it was probably in Ohio.

BRONSON: I got started in the League of Women Voters because an elderly lady who was active in the League kept telling me I should belong. So I did. I had not been active in political things. The league is nonpartisan, but I had not been active in that type of thing before. I became president of the Franklin County league, which is the county that Columbus is in. And I was also active in the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. I don't remember exactly how I started on that.

DOUGLASS: You were on the board of directors of the Columbus YWCA.

- BRONSON: Yes. I also became state public affairs chairman for the YWCA. That office has been abolished now. It was the only statewide office that the YWCA had.
- DOUGLASS: Were you doing the league work and YWCA work at the same time? Or did one come after the other?
- BRONSON: I think the league would have come first.
- DOUGLASS: Let's talk about that for a minute because I did notice that, at that time, there were certain issues on the table. One was you had mentioned that you worked successfully for the ratification of the child labor amendment.
- BRONSON: That is true. They gave the pen with which the ratification was signed to the league because of the league's work on it.
- DOUGLASS: It had been a study item.
- BRONSON: I am sure it had.
- DOUGLASS: Did that take an intense amount of effort on your behalf?
- BRONSON: Well, if you are active in the League of Women Voters, it always takes a lot of effort.
- [Laughter]
- DOUGLASS: That was a big cause.
- BRONSON: That was a cause. Also, we were interested in getting something done about the county juvenile

detention home, which was in very poor shape at that time.

DOUGLASS: This is in Columbus?

BRONSON: In Columbus.

DOUGLASS: Mrs. Bronson, do you remember anything in particular about working for the child labor law amendment? Were there factions in the state opposing it, or in your county opposing it?

BRONSON: Well, the Catholic Church opposed it. Very strenuously.

DOUGLASS: Oh, really. What was the basis for that?

BRONSON: The basis was that they felt that it tended to break up families if the children could not participate in work when the family needed funds. At least that was the reason they gave.

DOUGLASS: Was there some industrial and business opposition?

BRONSON: There apparently was, but it was not as vocal and active as the Catholic Church was. When the vote came, the gallery was full of priests and nuns.

DOUGLASS: Was it a tight vote?

BRONSON: I can't remember what the vote was.

DOUGLASS: Were you nervous? Do you remember being nervous?

BRONSON: No. We felt pretty confident that we had the votes. We had a very competent lobbyist who worked hard. It was she who received the [governor's bill-signing] pen on behalf of the league.

DOUGLASS: That is a very interesting issue to be involved in.

BRONSON: Yes. I thought so. Then we brought [Secretary of Labor] Frances Perkins to speak.

DOUGLASS: On this?

BRONSON: No. Just in general. She was the first woman cabinet member and everybody was interested in seeing what she was like. We took a hall that held a great many people, and then we were quite frightened for fear that we would not get a large enough audience. But we did. We had 5,000 people.

DOUGLASS: You didn't have enough room, maybe. Or was it that big a hall?

BRONSON: It was that big a hall.

DOUGLASS: This was in Franklin County.

BRONSON: This was in Columbus, Ohio.

DOUGLASS: This was in conjunction with the league.

BRONSON: Yes. The league brought her there, and everybody came. The governor introduced her. All of the women were interested because she was the first woman cabinet member. The political people came, and the labor people came. And the general public.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember what she talked about? Did you give her a topic or did she just come and talk?

BRONSON: She just came and talked. And I don't remember much about her speech, actually. I was so busy making sure that everything went smoothly.

DOUGLASS: You must have had some opportunity to just chat with her.

BRONSON: I met her at the station and drove her to where she was to speak. The main thing I remember about that was that we had a motorcycle escort, and they all turned their sirens on. She was horrified at that. She said, "Oh, have them turn them off." But I don't remember too much now about the content of what she had to say. I think it was rather general. I don't want to imply that it was a poor speech. I was just so busy.

DOUGLASS: I am interested in how you reacted to her personality. What was your impression of her?

BRONSON: Well, my impression was that she was a very competent person, but she was rather quiet and self-effacing. She was not pushing herself.

DOUGLASS: She must have been pleased at the turnout.

BRONSON: Yes. I am sure she was.

DOUGLASS: All right. That is one of those things where you put a lot of energy into arranging it.

BRONSON: Oh, yes.

DOUGLASS: The problem of the juvenile detention home, was that a local issue?

BRONSON: It was a county facility. One of the county commissioners owned the land on which it was. They had both sexes incarcerated there, both delinquents and dependents. They had inadequate facilities. It was really a very bad situation. And that was not cleared up until after my term was up and I had gone to California, but we laid the groundwork for it.

A lot of other organizations were interested also. The league got them all together and had a hearing before the county commissioners on it. The day we had the hearing, it poured rain. I thought, "Nobody will come." But everybody did, including the press, who gave us good support on the issue.

DOUGLASS: There was a conflict of interest with this county commissioner owning the land. Was that resolved?

BRONSON: It finally was.

DOUGLASS: Did you move to California around 1936? I should first go back and say that you did go to law school.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: While you were a housewife?

BRONSON: Yes. I had three children at that time. But I had help at home. We went to night school. My husband also studied law and was admitted to the bar. Since we went to night school, I was able to work things out.

DOUGLASS: Did it take you about four years?

BRONSON: Yes. It took me a year longer than it took my husband because my youngest child was born during that period.

DOUGLASS: Why had you decided to go to law school?

BRONSON: My husband wanted to go, and he said that unless I went also that we would never see each other because he would be working all day and studying law all the rest of the time. I had never thought about studying law myself, but it was interesting.

DOUGLASS: You enjoyed it then.

BRONSON: Yes. I enjoyed it.

DOUGLASS: I suppose it was always useful to you in your life.

BRONSON: Yes. It was. I think a knowledge of the law is useful to anybody. The people who went to night school were all--most of them anyway--hardworking people, who were spending their good money for getting a legal education. If the instructor was five minutes late, he heard about it from the class.

DOUGLASS: All right. You were admitted to the Ohio bar in 1935, I believe.

BRONSON: That's right.

DOUGLASS: Would it have been around '36 that you moved to California?

BRONSON: No. I believe it was 1935, later in the year.

DOUGLASS: You moved to live with your mother?

BRONSON: Yes. That's right.

DOUGLASS: Was that in Pasadena?

BRONSON: It was in Pasadena at first. In 1938, I moved to Claremont, and my mother later moved there also.

DOUGLASS: Somehow, that year, you became active very quickly because you were the charter president of the Pomona Valley League of Women Voters.

BRONSON: Yes. I did because there were some women who were anxious to form a league, but they had nobody who had had league experience previously to do it. So they seized upon me. They said I must be president of the league to get it off the ground.

DOUGLASS: Why had you selected Claremont as a place to live?

BRONSON: I had three daughters, and I knew the schools were good in Claremont. I thought that this would be a good place for them to be. I also knew some of the people who lived in Claremont.

DOUGLASS: Who was involved with that original group that chartered the league? Can you name a few people?

BRONSON: Ruth Ordway was one. I don't remember who all they were. You can get that from the league.

DOUGLASS: Sure. Where was the headquarters for that? It was the Pomona Valley League of Women Voters.

BRONSON: Yes. It included more than Claremont at that time, but the headquarters was in Claremont.

DOUGLASS: Did you meet quite a few people right away through that activity?

BRONSON: Yes. I forget how many members the league had at that time, but there were a good many. I met them, and I met people through my church. And some people through the schools that my daughters were going to.

DOUGLASS: Where did you live in Claremont in '38?

BRONSON: I lived up on the Padua ridge near the Padua Hills Theater. At that time, there was only one other house up there.

DOUGLASS: You were up on what we call Via Padova?

BRONSON: There was only one road that went up there at the time. It did not come around and back down. It wasn't paved, either, after you got up where the Padua Theater was.

DOUGLASS: It was real dusty then.

BRONSON: The thing I remember most vividly was that when it rained, my car just sank into the ground.

DOUGLASS: Was there a particular issue the Pomona Valley league was interested in attacking and that was partly why it was formed? Can you remember?

BRONSON: I don't think there was an issue that caused it to be formed. I think it was the total league program that people were interested in. But one

issue that I remember we worked on was the matter of pasteurization of milk. That was a local issue at the time.

DOUGLASS: Was that a county issue?

BRONSON: I just remember it as a Claremont issue. It was out in this area, anyway, that milk was sold that was not pasteurized.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember what dairies were involved?

BRONSON: We did not do it on the basis of a particular dairy.

DOUGLASS: You were trying to get a law passed that all milk had to be pasteurized.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What finally happened?

BRONSON: We succeeded in getting a local ordinance.

DOUGLASS: Because as, you know, the issue of raw milk is still around, with Alta Dena Dairy.

BRONSON: Well, I think it was a matter of a city ordinance here.

DOUGLASS: That you can only sell pasteurized milk in Claremont?

BRONSON: There is a history of the league that the league has that you could get more details from.

DOUGLASS: What was your first entry into partisan politics?

BRONSON: Well, I went to a national YWCA convention. I think it was in Philadelphia, and there I met Gladys Tillet, who was at that time the head of the women's division of the Democratic party nationally. I had some talks with her. She said, "These women's organizations have fine programs, but the actual decisions as to what happens lie in the realm of politics. That is where you should be functioning." It seemed to me that this had a certain amount of sense. So I decided that I would try it out.

DOUGLASS: But you really, by nature, had been happy with the league and the nonpartisan approach, right?

BRONSON: Yes. I was satisfied with that, but also I was not satisfied always with the progress that was made in implementing the programs.

DOUGLASS: Tell me about Gladys Tillet. What kind of a person was she?

BRONSON: She was one of the smartest politicians that I ever met, but a very pleasing person. She was from North Carolina. She never thrust herself forward. She was always building up the people who worked under her. Therefore, she was able to accomplish a great deal.

- DOUGLASS: And had achieved this position of being head of the women's division.
- BRONSON: Yes. Later, when they did away with the women's division, or even before that, she was made vice chairman of the Democratic national committee, which gave her more clout than she had purely on the women's side of it.
- DOUGLASS: She was made vice chairman of the whole committee?
- BRONSON: The national committee. Yes.
- DOUGLASS: When was her period of activity? We are talking in the thirties when you were active in the YWCA work.
- BRONSON: It was the late thirties. I would say it was probably the very end of the thirties, because I think it was 1939 or '40 that I started to become active in politics.
- DOUGLASS: At that point, you were already active in volunteer work with the YWCA when you met her, but after that you decided to get active in politics.
- BRONSON: Yes. Of course, I could not do anything partisan while I was active in the league. I was state public affairs chairman also in

California for the YWCA. That was when I was in Pasadena.

DOUGLASS: That was when you first got out here, right?

BRONSON: Yes. I had held that office in Ohio, and I also held it out here.

DOUGLASS: What did that office entail? What were you doing?

BRONSON: It has also been done away with now, but, at that time, I traveled around the state and worked with local YWCAs on the program which had been adopted by the national in the field of public affairs.

DOUGLASS: Did this have to do mainly with women's social issues?

BRONSON: No. It dealt with any kind of public affairs issues. For example, the business and professional women, especially, were interested in the migrant problem. The kind of housing that migrants received when they came out to California. This was one of the important issues of the time, during the dust-bowl era.

DOUGLASS: What would be the definition then of the issue that you could address as a YWCA? Was there a limitation?

- BRONSON: I don't know of any limitation. It was up to the vote of the members of the YWCA nationally and locally what they took up. Often the board of trustees of a local YWCA was more conservative than the business and industrial girls were. So you had to do a certain amount of interpretation with the boards.
- DOUGLASS: But, at the state level, which you were working at, whatever the state board approved, you could be functioning in?
- BRONSON: That's right. I was told once or twice by local YWCAs not to talk on a certain subject, but I did not have to follow that.
- DOUGLASS: Did you operate out of Pasadena doing that?
- BRONSON: Yes.
- DOUGLASS: Did this mean traveling quite a bit?
- BRONSON: Yes. I didn't travel much in northern California, but I traveled in southern California and central California.
- DOUGLASS: This was volunteer, right?
- BRONSON: Oh, yes.
- DOUGLASS: Do you remember any particular issue that you dealt with during that time?

- BRONSON: As I say, there was this question of the migrants. I think that was one of the main issues.
- DOUGLASS: Following that, is that when you became active and hooked up with the [Congressman H. Jeremiah] Voorhis campaign?
- BRONSON: It was after I finished my year as president of the Pomona Valley league.
- DOUGLASS: Right. Which you did in 1938-39. Or did you serve two years?
- BRONSON: I think I did it just one year. When I became active in Jerry Voorhis' campaigns, it began in 1939.
- DOUGLASS: How did that happen to be the way you became first active?
- BRONSON: Well, he was the incumbent congressman for this district. And, also, he had a very high reputation for integrity and for being interested in the kinds of things the Democratic party stood for. That was the natural place for me to start work, I thought. I started as a precinct worker.
- DOUGLASS: Let me back up a minute. Was there ever any question in your mind that you were going to be a Republican or a Democrat?

BRONSON: No. I had always been a Democrat. My family were Republican, however.

DOUGLASS: What made you the Democrat?

BRONSON: It was partly, for me, a matter of religion. The Democrats were always for the underdog, it seemed to me. The Republicans were more for the wealthy people and the issues those people were for. I just felt it was part of my religious beliefs that you should try to help the poor. I see this now as a rather naive approach.

DOUGLASS: Were you a member of the Episcopal church?

BRONSON: Not at that time. When I moved to Claremont, there was only one church in town. It was sort of a community church, and everybody went there no matter what their former affiliation had been. I was a member of that church for a long time. Meanwhile, the Episcopal church had been built.

DOUGLASS: The one here.

BRONSON: Yes. My father and some of my earlier ancestors were Episcopalians. In fact, the first one in this country before the revolution, was an Episcopalian rector. When I was not living in Claremont, I attended Episcopal churches. So it

was natural for me to affiliate here when there was an Episcopal church.

DOUGLASS: Would it be correct to say that your general religious view was to help the underdog?

BRONSON: I would not say that was the only goal.

DOUGLASS: But that was what drew you to that side of the party system.

BRONSON: I think so. Yes.

DOUGLASS: How specifically did you manage to make a contact and get involved?

BRONSON: I went to Jerry Voorhis' field office because he was in Washington at the time. I talked to his field secretary, whose name was [V. R.] Jack Long. I said, "I would like to do something. What would you like to have me do?" Well, I think he was somewhat suspicious of this person turning up out of the blue, but he sent me to the congressional vice chairwoman. That office has also been abolished now.

DOUGLASS: That is a district position.

BRONSON: That is a congressional district position. It was.

DOUGLASS: She would be the Twelfth Congressional District vice chair.

BRONSON: Yes. That was the title.

DOUGLASS: Vice chairman of what? Of the county committee?

BRONSON: Of the Democratic congressional district organization.

DOUGLASS: That's right. Each district in California had a congressional vice chairman or a chairman.

BRONSON: They had a chairman and a woman vice chairman. So I was channeled to the congressional vice chairwoman.

DOUGLASS: Was that Clara White?

BRONSON: Yes. She took me with her to a meeting of a group that was called the congressional district council. This was made up of all the state committee members in the district, all the county committee people in the district, the chairman of the Democratic clubs in the district, and a few members at large.

DOUGLASS: How big a group would that have been? That sounds like quite a lot of people.

BRONSON: It was. But it represented the activities of different parts of the district. It was a coordinating body.

DOUGLASS: So she took you to that meeting.

BRONSON: She took me to that meeting. The group met once a month. She herself was not very popular with the group. So they did not wish to have

anything much to do with me because she had introduced me. But I made up my mind that I would not be discouraged by this. I would try to make friends, which I succeeded in doing in a little while.

DOUGLASS: What did you first do?

BRONSON: I was a precinct worker. I stuffed envelopes, and I did telephoning and helped with meetings. Whatever groundwork sort of thing there was to be done. That is what precinct committee people do. They also help with registration and Get-Out-The-Vote.

DOUGLASS: Did you operate out of Voorhis' field office?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did you work much with Jack Long eventually?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. He was very responsible in the district. You see, Jerry himself had to be in Washington a great deal of the time. Jerry's father also was active and helped unofficially. Then there were a couple of men who were leaders in the district, one of whom later became a congressman himself, [Congressman] Chet Holifield. The other, I don't know what happened to him, but those two men were also

very responsible for building up Jerry. They were volunteers.

DOUGLASS: When did you first meet Jerry Voorhis?

BRONSON: I am sure I probably had heard him speak before I became active, but I can't tell you the exact date.

DOUGLASS: I mean, somewhere in here you are a volunteer working in the office and one of those times he was out in California.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What were your first impressions of him on a one-to-one basis, rather than hearing him give a speech?

BRONSON: I thought he was a very honest and dedicated person. Very intelligent. He stood for the kinds of things I also believed in. He was a very forceful speaker who had people follow his leadership.

DOUGLASS: At that time he was pretty popular in his district.

BRONSON: Yes. Very. Because everybody trusted him. And, also, he didn't have any very forceful candidates opposing him. He worked very hard. I believe he was voted by his colleagues in Washington as the hardest working congressman.

DOUGLASS: Right. He was. That was all a fairly successful operation, but you were also coming into the war period.

BRONSON: During part of the war period, I was not here in California. When my daughters went to college, I got a job in Washington.

DOUGLASS: Was that the position with the Library of Congress?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What exactly was your title there, Mrs. Bronson?

BRONSON: Well, I started out at a very lowly position, and it was just a temporary position that was to last during the war. The section was to go over all the magazine articles that came out that related to the war in any way and to make a three- or four-sentence summary on three-by-five file cards to send out to the congressional offices.

They brought a big cart with magazines every day. We skimmed them and made out those cards and then filed them. I discovered that if half of the personnel did the cards in the morning and the filing in the afternoon and then reversed the process in the afternoon, they got

out about twice the amount of production. So that was put into effect.

After the war was over, some people from that temporary setup were kept as permanent people. I was one of the ones kept. I became an economic analyst.

DOUGLASS: Was this in the research department?

BRONSON: Yes. It was called at that time the Legislative Reference Service, then it had another different name later on, the Legislative Research Department. I think that is what it is called now.

DOUGLASS: Would you have requests come in from a congressman's office for specific information?

BRONSON: Yes. That was what we did, answer such requests. We didn't do work for anybody but congressmen. However, their constituents could send a question.

DOUGLASS: What I meant was would you personally have an office come to you because you were in economics.

BRONSON: They didn't deal with us on a personal basis.

DOUGLASS: It was assigned out of the Library of Congress?

BRONSON: Yes. And if it was an important piece of work, it was reviewed by at least three different people in the department before it went out.

DOUGLASS: Who would those three people have been? What were their titles?

BRONSON: I don't think it would always be the same people.

DOUGLASS: I am trying to get a feeling for how the system worked.

BRONSON: The reputation, the tradition was, in the first place, that there would be no question for which we could not come up with an answer. The second one was that this review by these varied people was for the purpose of assuring accuracy and lack of bias. It was supposed to be that anyone reading a report from us would not be able to tell what the personal feelings of the person who prepared the report were.

DOUGLASS: Your training as a lawyer may have helped.

BRONSON: Yes. It did. For about a month, I worked in the section that dealt with state laws. But that was very routine work of just making a record of the changes in state laws all over the country. I didn't care about that at all. It didn't have enough interest in it. I did that

for about a month. Then I said that if that was all they had for me, I was not going to stay. In fact, I quit for about a month. Then they called me and said they had an opening in economics and would I like to come back? I said, "Yes. That would be fine."

DOUGLASS: Was it during this time that you met [Stephen I.] Steve Zetterberg?

BRONSON: Oh, it was not when I was in Washington. It was when I was out here that I met Steve. I don't remember exactly when.

DOUGLASS: You know he worked as an assistant to [U.S. Senator] Scott Lucas (1945-46)?

BRONSON: I don't think that was of the same time.

DOUGLASS: That was a little later. I think he is confused on that, maybe. All right. You left D.C. in '44.

BRONSON: I was in Washington in '43 and '44 and again in '47 and '48.

DOUGLASS: By then Steve Zetterberg was in California.

BRONSON: I don't remember talking to him in Washington at all. I just remember him out here.

DOUGLASS: At the time you were in D.C.--I don't know if it is that first time--I believe you said that you sent letters back to California.

BRONSON: Yes. I sent a series of letters, or you might say bulletins, back to the Democratic women I had worked with. These were just reports on what was going on in Washington during wartime.

DOUGLASS: So these were informational to the women in the party?

BRONSON: Yes. And they were not partisan, particularly just accounts of meetings I had attended or things that were going on in the city.

DOUGLASS: Why did you leave in 1944?

BRONSON: I was asked to take a temporary position with the CIO PAC [Congress of Industrial Organizations Political Action Committee]. This was in '44 when [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt was making his last campaign. So that what I was doing was more in connection with Roosevelt's campaign than it was with the labor groups, although they were the ones employing me. I was to travel around eleven western states and confer with people who were working on registration and Get-Out-The-Vote and help with their programs. I did that just on a temporary basis.

DOUGLASS: In connection with that, I think you told me that you got caught up with the whole red-baiting scenario.

BRONSON: Yes. Every Democratic candidate at that time was red-baited, no matter how conservative he or she might be. It was just a tactic. On one occasion, I was called by a reporter from the Los Angeles Times.

DOUGLASS: Was this after you had finished your work with the CIO PAC?

BRONSON: No. It was during the time. He told me that the [Los Angeles] Herald-Examiner had carried the story.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

DOUGLASS: You were saying that you were called by a reporter from the Times, about a story questioning your activities.

BRONSON: He was telling me about a story that had appeared in the Herald-Examiner, and he wanted my comment on this story. My comment was to tell him what my job actually was. I said I am to help people on registration and Get-Out-The-Vote, and I felt that was sort of patriotic. Well, he wrote a very nice little story in the Times with a box around it, quoting exactly what I had said. And I never heard anything from the committee itself.

DOUGLASS: That was a congressional investigating committee that was in California.

BRONSON: It came out to California.

DOUGLASS: It was holding hearings.

BRONSON: I was never called to any hearing. I never had any communication from the committee itself.

DOUGLASS: Let's loop that around to the situation in the '46 campaign of Jerry Voorhis, in which all kinds of charges were coming back and forth, including the fact he was tainted because of being endorsed by the CIO PAC.

BRONSON: There were two groups. One was the national PAC, and the other was the state PAC. Anyway, he had not been endorsed by the one that they claimed had endorsed him. It was a very dirty campaign carried on by the [Richard M.] Nixon campaign. I don't think anybody who knew what Jerry was like has ever forgiven Nixon for that campaign because it was so unfair.

DOUGLASS: As I recall, he was forced to defend himself by sort of rejecting the CIO PAC.

BRONSON: Well, it was the national PAC that he rejected. The other PAC had never endorsed him in the first place. I think the national did or offered to, and Jerry rejected it. I think Jerry would have done better not to try to debate this seriously with Nixon, but to have treated it as a ridiculous charge and made fun of Nixon about it. But Jerry was so upset by this type of campaign. I think he admitted before his death that he did not feel he had handled this as well as he might.

DOUGLASS: Were you involved in that campaign at all?

BRONSON: No. I was not. I was in Washington. It was '46 in which Jerry was defeated. I know I was not involved in his campaign at that time.

DOUGLASS: After you worked for the CIO PAC, which was in '44, what did you do?

BRONSON: I stayed out here in California for a while not doing anything except being with my mother and looking after her. As I recall, for a while, I didn't do anything until I went back to the library.

DOUGLASS: Which was in '46?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: So you were not active in the '46 campaign.

BRONSON: Not in Jerry's campaign, anyway.

DOUGLASS: Then, in 1946-47, you were in D.C. again at the Library of Congress working in the Legislative Reference Service.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did you like that work?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. It was very interesting and challenging. It was so varied. You never knew what you were going to be working on next. You couldn't always stick to your own field because if there was a bill up before the Congress, there were many requests for information on the particular subject. So you had to be flexible and work according to what the workload was at any particular time. My work was in the field

of economics, and my specialty was cartels and monopolies. But I could not always work on cartels and monopolies. I had to work on other things, such as foreign affairs.

DOUGLASS: Whatever came up?

BRONSON: Whatever came up.

DOUGLASS: Was it sort of a random assignment within a field, in the Legislative Reference Service?

BRONSON: Yes. I think you can say that. They did not like to have any congressman feel he could request a particular person.

DOUGLASS: Were there some assignments that took a long span of time?

BRONSON: Yes. Sometimes we had long reports to get out, taking several weeks perhaps.

DOUGLASS: You could spend a month on one project?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: You did your research basically there in the library?

BRONSON: No. We researched everywhere. For example, I had one inquiry wanting to know how many pounds of horse meat are consumed in various European countries in a year. I had to get my information on that from the Department of Agriculture. During the war, we had on our

staff a retired admiral and a retired general to help us get such information as we were entitled to from the Pentagon. It was very difficult to get any even perfectly innocent information from the Pentagon.

DOUGLASS: That is a whole series of stories we could talk about. It must have been fascinating.

BRONSON: Yes. I enjoyed it very much.

DOUGLASS: Why did you leave the Library of Congress in 1947?

BRONSON: My two older daughters had finished their college education, and I felt it was time for me to be back in California. There was no rift between myself and the library.

DOUGLASS: I just meant that you moved West again. Did you come back to Claremont?

BRONSON: Yes. For a while, I lived in Alhambra and I lived in West Arcadia. I am very bad about dates, so I don't remember exactly when I was where.

DOUGLASS: Yes. I noticed in one of the clippings when you were working in the early fifties, Arcadia was mentioned.

BRONSON: West Arcadia was where I was. My mother and I had rented a house there.

DOUGLASS: In '48, I believe you were involved in Steve Zetterberg's congressional race.

BRONSON: He says that I was his finance chairman, and if I was, I don't think I did very much. I probably kept the records, but I don't think I raised much money. I think that was done by other people.

DOUGLASS: Was it, though, out of helping to run that campaign that you were named to the state central committee?

BRONSON: He did appoint me to the state central committee.

DOUGLASS: The '48 but not the '50 campaign?

BRONSON: I just don't remember.

DOUGLASS: The reason why I am guessing is that if, in '50, you became the southern California vice chair, I am wondering whether you had not been involved with the state central committee earlier.

BRONSON: I am sure I had, but I just don't remember.

DOUGLASS: Of course, each candidate at that time was entitled to name three people to the state committee. And it was Steve who probably named you. It must have been because he was the candidate in '48 and '50.

BRONSON: Well, it probably was, but I just don't remember who appointed me when. I never considered it was terribly important.

DOUGLASS: I guess the point is how did you happen to be asked to be vice chair for southern California?

BRONSON: I had been very active. Of course, when [Congresswoman] Helen Gahagan Douglas was national committeewoman, I worked very closely with her.

DOUGLASS: Let's pick up that strand because I was looking at her book.¹ She describes, in her book, that she had just become a national committeewoman and William Malone, who was at that time the state chairman, just announced that she was going to be the state vice chairman and, not only that, but she was going to be vice chairman for both the north and south of California. She describes in her book wandering into the L.A. [Los Angeles] Democratic headquarters and, by good fortune, she says, meeting you and asking you some questions. Do you remember that?

BRONSON: I don't remember that particular occasion. She became quite interested in the workings of the

¹A Full Life (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1982).

state committee office, especially the women's division.

DOUGLASS: Was that, maybe, when you first met her?

BRONSON: Yes. I think it was around that time. I think the first time I met her, I heard her speak publicly, I thought at first she was too dramatic, too emotional. But after I came to know her a little better, I realized that she was a very practical and intelligent person. Her way of speaking, which was very appealing to many people, didn't bother me anymore.

DOUGLASS: I am wondering if that event must not have occurred in the early forties. It was at the time of Franklin Roosevelt's running for the third term that she went on the national committee. It was at that convention that they put her on the national committee. That is how the book reads. Everything seems to happen at once. I was wondering if she didn't meet you down there in the period of '41, before you went to D.C.

BRONSON: Yes. I think that is probably so.

DOUGLASS: She said that she asked you questions like: did the women's division have its own office? You said, "No." That you had to share it with the

men. I guess she was concerned that the women didn't have an independent financing ability.

BRONSON: Yes. That's right.

DOUGLASS: Did you start to work with her right away?

BRONSON: Very soon, I think. It kind of developed more and more. Esther Murray and I were the two that she worked with closely.

DOUGLASS: She said that you were her advisor on domestic affairs and she asked Esther Murray, who then was head of the policy division for the AAUW [American Association of University Women] to advise her on foreign affairs.

BRONSON: I didn't think it was quite as clear-cut as that. I didn't feel I was just confined to domestic affairs.

DOUGLASS: But she asked Esther Murray to help her after she had already tied into you. I think that is the way it sounds.

BRONSON: Yes. I think that is true.

DOUGLASS: Had you known Esther Murray before?

BRONSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Was she in southern California?

BRONSON: Yes. Later, she was in Washington and worked for the labor people after she finished working with Helen. That was later.

DOUGLASS: Were you just a volunteer, coming in and out of the Democratic headquarters at that time, in Los Angeles?

BRONSON: I was always a volunteer, except for the short time I worked for CIO PAC.

DOUGLASS: What I meant is how much time would you be there?

BRONSON: I came in every day.

DOUGLASS: You were a regular then.

BRONSON: Yes. I had one secretary to help me work with all the Democratic women for the whole of southern California.

DOUGLASS: I am talking about that time in the early forties, with Helen Gahagan Douglas.

BRONSON: That was true when I was working with her. I came into the office every day from Claremont.

DOUGLASS: Did she, indeed, find separate quarters for the women? Separate from the men?

BRONSON: Well, she secured separate financing. But I don't recall anytime when I was there having a separate office.

DOUGLASS: Where was that in Los Angeles, Mrs. Bronson? Do you remember where you went?

BRONSON: It was downtown somewhere. Probably in my files I have a letterhead.

DOUGLASS: I was curious if you were right in the middle of downtown.

BRONSON: Right in the middle of downtown.

DOUGLASS: To continue that little period in there, which is the '40-'41 period that she speaks of in the book. She speaks of one big event that you really organized. It was a two-day conference.

BRONSON: Yes. I remember that. It was for Democratic women all over the state and some from out of state. We had speakers such as cabinet members, some congressmen. All sorts of important people who came from Washington to participate in the program. It was held at the Ambassador Hotel. There were workshops. There were dinners and luncheons and various kinds of programs which went all day.

It was a great big job to organize. Helen took charge of the people who came from Washington. I had charge of the arrangements with the hotel and all that sort of thing. It was an exhausting but very successful conference.

DOUGLASS: What was the goal of the conference?

BRONSON: I think it was to educate the women on Democratic issues.

DOUGLASS: I sense from something she said in her book that it was also, of course, to fire people up to send people to congress who would support Roosevelt.

BRONSON: Oh, yes.

DOUGLASS: That is always the goal of a party. Interestingly enough, one of the people who came out was Gladys Tillet, as vice chairman of the party. And Edward J. Flynn, who was the chairman.

BRONSON: The arrangement was that the expenses of the people who came from Washington [D.C.] would be borne by the national committee, and all the other expenses would be borne by the local groups. We paid our part of it right away, as soon as the conference was over and the bills came in. But the national committee did not do so. I had a call one day from the hotel, saying that the bills had not been paid for the Washington people. At that time [Edwin W.] Ed Pauley was treasurer of the national committee. He was not in town, but I went over to his office and talked to his secretary and said, "I expect this to be paid within twenty-four hours." And it was.

DOUGLASS: Had it just slipped through the system somehow or what? Do you know?

BRONSON: I think they expected that we would get stuck with the whole bill.

DOUGLASS: A little strategy there, maybe. [Laughter]

BRONSON: That is just a guess.

DOUGLASS: There are a lot of satisfactions, but there are a lot of frustrations when you work with a volunteer setup. There are a lot of personalities that get involved.

BRONSON: Oh, yes. This is always the case. Especially, the more local it gets, the more frustrations.

DOUGLASS: Who were some of the other women you were working with? Maybe that is too early. We can take that up later, when you became vice chair.

BRONSON: I think so.

DOUGLASS: One other thing. I noticed that [Governor] Culbert [L.] Olson appointed you to the board of the Institute for the Mentally Retarded.

BRONSON: That was the institution at Spadra.

DOUGLASS: Were you on that board very long?

BRONSON: I don't remember how long. Maybe a year or so. Not any extended period.

DOUGLASS: Do you have any idea why or how you happened to be appointed?

- BRONSON: I was local. I could get there. I was interested in that type of situation. I had been on a board in Ohio, appointed by the governor of Ohio, to visit five of the county institutions there, including the old people's home and the county jail and several others. So I had that experience. I don't know of any other reason. It was not anything I asked for, and it was volunteer.
- DOUGLASS: What were your impressions of Olson? Did you have an opportunity to observe him much?
- BRONSON: Well, yes and no. Helen and I made a couple of visits up at Sacramento to talk to the governor. I was at dinners and heard him speak. I don't feel I knew him really well on a personal basis, but I think he made a good governor.
- DOUGLASS: Let's loop around to the thing with Helen Gahagan Douglas.
- BRONSON: Culbert Olson had been a railroad man, a telegrapher, in his youth. He still remembered the code. I sat next to him at dinner one time, and he tried tapping out a message with his table knife, but, of course, I could not understand what it was.

I was at a dinner with him when the Japanese, during the war, shelled the oil tanks up north of Santa Barbara at Goleta. He was speaking and all of a sudden this ripple went around the room and you could feel it go. He stopped speaking and said, "I am told we are off the air because of the shelling that a Japanese submarine is doing." I was sitting next to the woman who was the postmistress of Los Angeles, and she turned to me and said, "My son is patrolling that beach." So there was a blackout for a while, and then it was lifted and the meeting continued. I had been planning to spend the night in Los Angeles that night because I knew the meeting would be late, but I decided to get home where my daughters were. So I went on out to Claremont.

DOUGLASS: Well, it was pretty scary.

BRONSON: Yes. It was, because nobody knew what was going to happen next. Nobody knew why this submarine was shelling that. It could not affect much, even if it hit one of the oil tanks. But they didn't know whether this might be the preliminary to a lot of other things.

- DOUGLASS: That is interesting that you commented on that because a lot of people don't realize . . .
- BRONSON: That this ever happened.
- DOUGLASS: Or they think people were overreacting. It is hard to put themselves back in time as to how people felt and how little anybody knew about what might happen.
- BRONSON: I thought they might close the roads to civilian traffic. That is why I wanted to get back to Claremont.
- DOUGLASS: Let's flesh out the rest of the Helen Gahagan Douglas connection you had. When you came back in '48 and from then on, did you work at all with her on activities, leading up to '50?
- BRONSON: I was not part of her campaign for the United States Senate. I was state vice chairman in 1950, and I, therefore, was supporting all of the Democratic races. But I was not a part of her individual campaign at that time.
- DOUGLASS: What do you recall of this peculiar situation in which [U.S. Senator] Sheridan Downey, the incumbent Democrat senator, and she were in the primary and then Downey withdrew. And then the person plugged in was Manchester Boddy. What do you recall of all that? You had to be neutral

in a sense because they were all Democratic candidates.

BRONSON: I remember all that happening, but I don't think I ever knew the inside story of that.

DOUGLASS: Was Sheridan Downey well thought of in the party at that point?

BRONSON: Well, there were differences of opinion about him. There was something he was accused of that related to getting more than his share of scarce war [items], like tires and things of that sort. I never knew him at all well, so I don't feel that I can make much comment about that.

DOUGLASS: Do you recall being surprised that he withdrew?

BRONSON: I don't think I was too surprised.

DOUGLASS: Were you surprised at Boddy being plugged into his place?

BRONSON: I think Boddy had been quite ambitious for quite a while. Again, I never knew him well.

DOUGLASS: This became pretty divisive in the primary?

BRONSON: Well, when there are several candidates, it is always divisive.

DOUGLASS: I guess what I am asking for is your observation of that primary. With Boddy's candidacy, and then once Helen Gahagan Douglas won in the primary, were there aftereffects that entered

into the final race in terms of a Democrats-for-Nixon kind of activity?

BRONSON: There were Democrats-for-Nixon, but I am not sure whether they wouldn't be Democrats-for-Nixon, anyway.

DOUGLASS: The cross-filing was still there to bug everybody.

BRONSON: Cross-filing, I thought, was a very bad thing because people don't seem to understand that the purpose of the primary is for each party to select its best candidate. You are not supposed to be electing somebody in the primary. You are supposed to be selecting the candidate who can best represent the particular party to which you belong. If you have cross-filing, it just negates the whole purpose for which the primary was set up.

DOUGLASS: Do you have any other comments about that 1950 race?

BRONSON: Well, I would like to make one other comment about cross-filing. As I remember the situation when it was first instituted, there was some reason for it. The Southern Pacific Railroad had such a stranglehold on the state that it was

an attempt to break that stranglehold. Now what was the other question?

DOUGLASS: Do you have any other observations you could make about that notorious 1950 senatorial race between Nixon and Helen Gahagan Douglas?

BRONSON: Yes, I do. Again, it was the same kind of tactics that he used against Jerry Voorhis, of trying to make out that she was too far to the left or even a Communist.

I came out of my house in West Arcadia one day, and there was a Republican lady standing on the corner. She was handing out these pink sheets which compared Helen's position with some of the positions taken by [Vito] Marcantonio, who was thought to be a Communist. She offered one to me, and I said, "No thank you, because I am supporting Mrs. Douglas." She said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, she is a Communist." I said, "I beg your pardon, I know Mrs. Douglas personally. I have been a guest in her home. I know how she thinks, and you are quite mistaken." She said, "Well, why did she vote with Marcantonio on this and this?" Well, this was not a case of Helen's voting with Marcantonio. It was a case of his voting with

the stands of the Democratic party, and he had to vote some way. He was not about to vote with the Republicans.

I have seen in an oral [history] interview that was done between Jerry Voorhis and Steve Zetterberg in which--much later after Jerry was living out here again--Steve Zetterberg said, "Nixon doing this or having his people do it was because she had previously attacked Nixon on the same sort of grounds."¹

DOUGLASS: Comparing a vote?

BRONSON: Comparing Nixon's vote with Marcantonio's. And that is in this oral interview. Now I never heard or saw any such thing on the part of Helen's campaign. I think if it had been done, I would have known about it. I never ever heard anybody but Steve Zetterberg tell about this. I just wonder if it could have happened.

DOUGLASS: I was reading her book. It didn't happen first. She makes a comment that they did look up and see that, in fact, there were a hundred-and-some times when Nixon. . . . Let me just look at

¹Horace Jeremiah Voorhis, Oral History Interview, 1971, Conducted by Stephen I. Zetterberg and Enid H. Douglass, Oral History Program, Claremont Graduate School, pp. 30-31.

this for a minute. I think you are right that it wasn't that she did it first.

BRONSON: This was the inference in Zetterberg's oral interview. I just doubt that this was so because it would not be at all like Helen. And I never heard of it.

DOUGLASS: She states in the book that Nixon kept reiterating that she voted the same as Marcantonio 354 times. Eventually, they did look it up to see, if you wanted to use this kind of an approach, if you could say that Nixon had also voted the same as Marcantonio many times.

BRONSON: That is quite different from her doing it before he did it.

DOUGLASS: That's right. That is the way she puts it.

BRONSON: I feel very strongly about that. And I saw in the oral interview that Jerry Voorhis made no response.

DOUGLASS: Good point. I am glad you made it. Did you personally see Helen Gahagan Douglas during this period? You were friends.

BRONSON: Oh, yes. But I wasn't as close to her as I had been when I was working right with her, you see. She had a campaign manager, a man and his wife

who managed her 1950 campaign. There were many of Helen's friends who felt that this was a little bit unfortunate. They sort of alienated some of Helen's previous friends and didn't encourage them to be active in the campaign. I think that was one reason that I didn't see as much of her as I had.

DOUGLASS: That is a whole story in itself. I was just interested in your observations, since you had known her earlier, really at the beginning of her interest in politics.

BRONSON: She became interested in politics, initially, when she and Melvyn saw this stream of migrants crossing the country during the dust-bowl period. She told me that she and Melvyn were driving West, and they saw all these people with their pitiful belongings, streaming West. She said to Melvyn, "These are real people." That was the start of their interest in politics.

DOUGLASS: All right. Let's pick up something we started, and that is your being the vice chair for southern California for '50-'52. I think you said you were not exactly sure how that happened, but you, of course, had been very active.

BRONSON: That's right.

DOUGLASS: Glenn [M.] Anderson was the chairman of the Democratic central committee at that time.

BRONSON: He was the other person in the office. Usually, they have one from the south and one from the north. They switch back and forth. If I was vice chairman, the chairman should have been from the north. But I remember vividly his being in the office all the time.

DOUGLASS: It is a two-year term that you had?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Just talk about your activities. What kinds of responsibilities did you carry, doing that?

BRONSON: We had to try to organize the women in southern California and also educate them. At that time, when the women's division was active, they got out a lot of good educational material. They got out a national monthly magazine, and they got out bulletins and so on to educate the women in the Democratic clubs on issues. They no longer do this, and I think it is a great pity. It was a very good resource. We did fund raising. We participated in registration work and Get-Out-The-Vote and all those kinds of

things, but working with women rather than the whole population.

DOUGLASS: Who would have been some of the women in southern California in this general period? Women you worked with. [Florence] Susie Clifton. Was she one?

BRONSON: Yes. I remember Susie very well. She was very active and able. There were other women who were, but I just can't remember their names any more. There was one from Long Beach who was very active. Helen worked very well with all these women. I have seen occasions when they were disagreeing on something and kind of spitting back and forth, and Helen would come into a room and have them so busy doing something on planning projects. In about five minutes, they forgot to be annoyed with each other.

I can't remember just when it was, but perhaps during this time, I was in charge of one of the big Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners in Los Angeles. And I had auditors come in every single day during the period we were incurring expenses and selling tickets so that I could account for every single ticket and every single

cent of expenditure that was made on that dinner. And those dinners run into thousands of dollars.

DOUGLASS: Those are big events. That means you were handling a large, large group of volunteers.

BRONSON: Yes. I remember one occasion when Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt was coming to speak in Los Angeles. The men had arranged this. It was to be in the Biltmore Theater. The employees of the Biltmore Theater thought this would be a fine time to pull a strike. So they did. Of course, they couldn't ask Mrs. Roosevelt to cross the picket line.

So the men turned this event over to the women's division. There was very little time to arrange anything else or see about anything. But we could not refuse to sponsor a meeting at which Mrs. Roosevelt was to speak. So we arranged to have it in the hotel itself. In the middle of her speech, the microphone failed. You know, she did not have a very carrying voice. It was not a well-carried-out meeting as far as the arrangements were concerned, and we were made the goats.

DOUGLASS: Those little unexpected crises that you don't need. Did you have many times where you met Mrs. Roosevelt?

BRONSON: I met her when she came out here. I met her in Washington D.C. when I first went there. My daughters were in college and I had decided if I could get a job in Washington I would be able to see them. They were in the East. Helen gave me a letter of introduction to every cabinet member. I never presented these letters. I did not want to get a job that way.

I am sure that Helen was the guiding force in Mrs. Roosevelt inviting my daughters and me to tea at the White House. I thought, when I got the invitation, that it was one of the large affairs that great numbers of people come to. But it was just my daughters and myself. So they came from their colleges and, being Californians, neither one of them had a hat. I said, "You can't go to the White House without a hat."

DOUGLASS: [Laughter] Hat and gloves.

BRONSON: Hat and gloves. So we had to scurry around about that. She received us in the upstairs private quarters. She was particularly

interested in what was happening to the Japanese who had been put in concentration camps out here in California. She wanted me to tell her what I knew about that situation, which I did. The invitation was just a gracious thing that Mrs. Roosevelt did.

DOUGLASS: To take the time to entertain you.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What was she like in that very intimate situation?

BRONSON: She was very interested in other people and asked me questions about my work at the Library of Congress. And asked my daughters questions about their colleges and that sort of thing. I didn't try to bring up too much that was controversial or that I thought she might not want to discuss.

DOUGLASS: It was a social visit. Was she a warm person?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. She was a warm person. I think when she spoke to audiences, this came out. I heard her speak to an audience out here in Big Bridges [Auditorium], and the audience was rather hostile at the beginning because there are so many Republicans in Claremont. It was very fascinating to see how she gradually won over a

great many of these people. She was much more charming and attractive when you saw her face-to-face than she was in her news pictures, which very frequently did not show her at her best. I had great admiration for her.

I think I was most fortunate in my political time of working with three outstanding women. Gladys Tillet, Helen Gahagan Douglas, and Mrs. Roosevelt.

DOUGLASS: Yes. That is an unusual era.

[End Session 1]

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Session 2, October 4, 1989]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

DOUGLASS: I believe the place to start today is with your going to Arizona. We don't have it on tape, but you had told me that you knew a family, the [William] Kimballs, here in Claremont, who were developing near the Sedona area. Perhaps you could just repeat that.

BRONSON: It was about thirty miles south of Flagstaff, so it was a much lower elevation, about 5,000 feet. Therefore, it was not as cold in the winter. Yes, they were developing a subdivision near Sedona. They offered to supervise the building of a house for me. I had been over a number of times and liked the country very much. So I decided that when I finished my term of office here in California, that this is where I would move.

DOUGLASS: Meaning as southern vice chairman of the state central committee.

BRONSON: That's right. I finished that in '52 and moved over to Arizona also in 1952.

DOUGLASS: What did you plan to do in professional work?

BRONSON: I didn't have any very definite plans. I wanted a break from politics. I didn't think I would be active in politics anymore. You get sort of fed up with it in time, and I had reached that point. I expected to live a life of reading and learning about Arizona, hiking, and that sort of thing. I didn't expect to go into professional work or into politics when I moved.

DOUGLASS: How did it all happen that you did do these things?

BRONSON: In the first place, as to politics, I observed what was taking place. I suppose it is the old war-horse coming out. The national committeewoman who was in office then followed the custom of Arizona, at that time, which was that women were not expected to take a very active part. The national committeewoman was expected to wear a decorative hat and attend large meetings, and that was about all. In the part of Arizona where I lived, there was not

much organization. There was not much going on politically.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember the name of the national committeewoman?

BRONSON: She was the wife of the owner of a newspaper in Prescott. I can't think of the name.

DOUGLASS: You started to observe what was going on. What county were you in?

BRONSON: I lived in Yavapai County. There are two counties which are adjacent right at the point where I lived. Right in Sedona. The one that Flagstaff is in is Coconino County. The one that Prescott is in and Jerome and some of those towns are in is Yavapai County.

DOUGLASS: Did you go to the Democratic meetings in the county when you first moved there?

BRONSON: There were not many Democratic meetings going on. There was more of a Republican organization than there was Democratic. We opened a headquarters in Cottonwood, where they had never had a headquarters before. Then there was a headquarters in Prescott. At our headquarters in Cottonwood, one of the first people to come in was Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater. He stuck his head in the door with a broad grin and said,

"Well, how are you doing?" [Laughter] The woman in charge responded sweetly, "Senator, just fine."

DOUGLASS: [Laughter] Was that the first time you ever encountered Senator Goldwater?

BRONSON: He came to Sedona to speak, and I went and sat in the back to hear what he had to say. This seemed to impress some of the Republicans. They considered me very open-minded for having attended this meeting, whereas I was really getting information to see how we could defeat him. [Laughter] But we were not able to defeat him.

DOUGLASS: Was he quite personable?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. I always got along quite well with Senator Goldwater and his staff. There was an occasion in Flagstaff when they were planning to revamp the city. There was a group of black people who had homes near the center of the city that they owned and had put money into to make them very nice. And the city was planning to move them out to the edge of the city. I went to Senator Goldwater's field representative about it. He went to work on it right away and

got it straightened out, but I got the credit for some reason.

DOUGLASS: So it was a fairly pleasant relationship with his office.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: The fact that he would stick his head in the door says something about him. The fact that he would drop by the Democratic headquarters office and say hello.

BRONSON: He was a very genial personality.

DOUGLASS: All right. Let's go on with what happened politically in Arizona. I am trying to lead up to how you became a national committeewoman from Arizona. So you tell the story.

BRONSON: At that time Maricopa County, which is the county that Phoenix is in, had so many votes, and voted under the unit rule, that they could control the election of any state party officer or national committeeperson.

DOUGLASS: In other words, in Arizona they had enough votes that if they took the majority, their will prevailed.

BRONSON: That is right. The smaller counties did not like this because they felt they had no proper voice in political matters, although they had a

congressman from Tucson. So they all banded together and tried to get some voice by putting up a candidate for national committeewoman, which they asked me to run for. Unless all of the small counties banded together and threw all their votes to one person, Maricopa County would prevail. Congressman Stewart [L.] Udall and his brother, Morris [K. Udall], were particularly interested.

In Arizona, the national committeeman and committeewoman are selected by the state convention, which is different from California. In the state convention, there were a number of women candidates initially, but it got down to between the woman from Maricopa County and myself who were tied. The vote got down to the last county, which was Yuma County, running alphabetically, and it was still a tie. The Yuma County chairman asked for a time-out for them to have a caucus. So they went out and came back and cast their seven votes for me. That was the margin by which I was elected.

[Laughter] This was such an unusual turnover in Arizona politics that the Phoenix newspaper ran a banner headline about it on their front page.

- DOUGLASS: Do you remember at all who the Maricopa County candidate was? Was she someone who had not been a national committeewoman?
- BRONSON: She had not, but she had been very active for a good many years in state politics. However, not everybody chose her.
- DOUGLASS: Who asked you to run, to begin with?
- BRONSON: I think it was the Yavapai County chairman who talked to me about it first.
- DOUGLASS: The notion was that if they could get you to run, they could convince the other small counties to band behind you? And it finally came down to that in the convention?
- BRONSON: That's right.
- DOUGLASS: How did you feel about it?
- BRONSON: Everybody, it seemed to me, in the state of Arizona told me that they were the one person who decided the matter. So I thanked them all.
[Laughter]
- DOUGLASS: How big a group would that Arizona state convention have been? Just a wild guess. Was it a large group of people?
- BRONSON: Yes. It is a pretty large group of people. Yuma County was a small county, and it had seven votes in the convention.

DOUGLASS: How many counties are there in Arizona?

BRONSON: I would have to count them up.

DOUGLASS: Are we talking about a convention of 500 people?

BRONSON: I would say probably not that many. I would say probably around three or four hundred. I never thought about it in those terms.

DOUGLASS: Did you have to speak? Make a presentation before the election?

BRONSON: I went around before the election and visited various places in Maricopa County because we were hoping that we could break the unit rule, which we were not able to.

DOUGLASS: I see. So, procedurally, you were trying to make that move first?

BRONSON: Yes. And I especially went around to the ethnic minority areas to get their support if they had a chance to vote.

DOUGLASS: Did you have an alternate plan if you broke the unit rule? Did you have a specific plan that you were pushing?

BRONSON: Well, if we broke the unit rule, we knew that we would get some votes from Maricopa County. That was our main objective.

DOUGLASS: You were trying to break up their empire.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: I suppose there is some resentment always on the part of smaller counties toward the bigger ones. Maybe you were there at the right time?

BRONSON: Yes. I think that was true. There was a certain amount of rivalry between Phoenix and Tucson.

DOUGLASS: When you talked to people and went out into the hustings, what kind of pitch did you give? What did you talk about in terms of your qualifications?

BRONSON: I think other people talked about that more than I did. I talked to them about what their needs were.

DOUGLASS: Did you have any particular needs that you can remember now that you addressed? Causes?

BRONSON: I was always a liberal, and the smaller counties were much more liberal, relatively speaking at least, than Maricopa County was. Arizona, at that time, had a great many southern Democrats. People who had moved from Texas and from various southern states. It was almost like a southern Democratic area.

DOUGLASS: So it was somewhat conservative.

BRONSON: Yes. It was.

DOUGLASS: What would other people say to push you? What would they bring out about you?

BRONSON: Of course, they brought out the fact about the positions I had held in California. My opposition tried to seize upon that and say that I had been sent from California to steal their water.

DOUGLASS: Sort of a carpetbagger.

BRONSON: Right.

DOUGLASS: The fact that you were a lawyer, was that anything that was used?

BRONSON: I don't think so particularly.

DOUGLASS: By this time you were working or not working?

BRONSON: I was not.

DOUGLASS: You were elected, and then a man was elected. Is that correct?

BRONSON: The man was from Maricopa County. The national committeeman. At that time, every state had just one national committeeman and one national committeewoman.

DOUGLASS: Right. Were you both elected at that time or was it an overlapping thing?

BRONSON: I think we were both elected at that time. I am pretty sure.

DOUGLASS: Can you remember who the man was?

- BRONSON: Yes. I can remember him quite well because he was a difficult person for me to work with. He was an alcoholic, and, also, he used his position as national committeeman to lobby with the state legislature for some legal clients he had.
- DOUGLASS: He was a lawyer then?
- BRONSON: Yes.
- DOUGLASS: Do you remember his name?
- BRONSON: No.
- DOUGLASS: How did he treat you?
- BRONSON: He tried to make use of me, in a way, because if there were something like tickets to give out for something, he would promise tickets to many more people than there were tickets. Then he would disappear, leaving me to hand out the tickets. But he was always perfectly affable towards me.
- DOUGLASS: He knew there would be a committeewoman. Did you feel you were treated differently because you were a woman?
- BRONSON: Yes. I did at first because, as I say, the national committeewoman had not been very active in the past. I found at some of the large meetings, there would be a chair on the platform

for the national committeeman but no chair for the national committeewoman. So I decided that because the women do so much work that this was not right. So the next meeting, I just went up on the platform and stood there until somebody brought me a chair.

DOUGLASS: To put a date on this, I believe you were national committeewoman from '56 to '60.

BRONSON: That's right.

[Interruption]

DOUGLASS: We were just talking about how you as a woman were treated and the fact that you just went up and stood and somebody came up with a chair for you. Is that symbolic of how it had been.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Did people catch on pretty quickly that that wasn't the way you were going to tolerate being treated?

BRONSON: Yes. They did. And I never had that experience again. For example, they had a big dinner in Tucson at which [Congressman] James Roosevelt came to speak. He had known me in California. I was not seated at the head table. I was seated directly below it, and he saw me there. Immediately, he came down from the head table to

greet me. And, also, when he began his speech, he mentioned me as being someone he was glad to see there.

DOUGLASS: Was the fact that you had not been a longtime resident of Arizona any kind of a handicap in terms of your getting up to speed?

BRONSON: No. I didn't really find that was a handicap. There were a great many women who worked very actively. I was in charge of the state headquarters in one campaign. We had quantities of volunteers working there.

DOUGLASS: What were you expected to do as the national committeewoman from Arizona?

BRONSON: I was supposed to travel around the state and confer with women, help to get them well organized, and make speeches. Generally, have charge of the women's activities.

DOUGLASS: Did you have a specific relationship to the state committee?

BRONSON: The national committeemen and committeewomen are primarily liaison persons between the state and Washington. In that connection, I would like to mention I think it was a mistake for them to change. In California, for instance, there are now quite a number of national committeemen and

committeewomen. This change was based on population with the idea of making it more democratic. But, actually, the effect of it was to make the state chairman the channel instead of the national committeemen and committeewomen and to channel all the power to one person.

- DOUGLASS: You mean because there are now so many?
- BRONSON: Yes. There is nobody who is the channel through which you go, so far as the national chairpersons are concerned.
- DOUGLASS: Too dispersed?
- BRONSON: Too dispersed.
- DOUGLASS: How long ago was that change made?
- BRONSON: I am not sure. I think it was while I was in Arizona, but I don't know the exact date.
- DOUGLASS: Was all of your work done at your own personal expense?
- BRONSON: Oh, yes. You don't get any expenses paid either for your trips to Washington, which you have to make at least four times a year, or your expenses to a national convention, or your expenses within the state. You don't have any money to work with at all.
- DOUGLASS: Who was the national committee chairman when you were on?

BRONSON: It was Paul Butler.

DOUGLASS: Oh, yes. Right. Any comments about him as national chairman?

BRONSON: I thought he was a very good national chairman. I didn't have a lot of personal contact with him, but what I did was very satisfactory.

DOUGLASS: Now each state can organize and name chairmen or chairwomen to the national committee as they see fit. How big was the national committee? There were only two of you from Arizona.

BRONSON: There were two from every state.

DOUGLASS: So it was later when it was changed so a state like California could have many if it wants?

BRONSON: I don't know how all the other states do. My impression was that when they made that change, they based it on population.

DOUGLASS: So at the time you were there, there were two per state. This is not too huge a group of people.

BRONSON: That's right.

DOUGLASS: There were only forty-eight states. Ninety-six people, the chairman, and whatever.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Were there any people you met through that experience you would like to comment on? People who were outstanding, one way or another?

BRONSON: You mean in the national committee?

DOUGLASS: Yes. Was India Edwards a national committeewoman then?

BRONSON: Yes. She was at least part of the time, anyway. Lorena Hickok was Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary. Both those women were very strong women. They were entirely different type of women from Gladys Tillet, for example. Much more seeking of power for themselves than she was. Much more aggressive. For me, Gladys Tillet's approach was a better approach.

DOUGLASS: How would you describe her approach?

BRONSON: She was always building up the people who were under her. She was never pushing for herself. She was always pushing for people who worked with her, and this made her very popular with her fellow workers.

DOUGLASS: That's another form of power, isn't it?

BRONSON: I suppose so. To me, it was a better way of going about it. She accomplished a great deal of the objectives that she had by doing it in a nonaggressive sort of way.

- DOUGLASS: Were there any big rows that went on while you were on the committee? Can you remember a big scene over something where people disagreed?
- BRONSON: No. I don't think I remember any big rows.
- DOUGLASS: Do you remember any burning issues that you, as a national committeewoman, had to make a vote on or talk to in the national committee meetings?
- BRONSON: Well, of course, the women were always trying to get more recognition than they did get or had gotten in the past. I think, on the whole, women are more interested in social issues than men are. Of course, there are certain issues that are now labeled to be women's issues, which I don't think is a good label because they affect everybody--almost all of the issues do--rather than just women. But they were interested in the environment, interested in equal pay for equal work, the equal rights amendment. Things of this sort.
- DOUGLASS: Did the committeewomen meet together separately at all?
- BRONSON: No. We had four meetings a year of the committee. The women, of course, who lived near Washington could get there more easily.
- DOUGLASS: Yes. The old story of the West.

BRONSON: Yes. I used to go there sometimes between committee meetings, if there was something that took me there.

DOUGLASS: Anything else about your political work while you were in Arizona? Principally, in conjunction with being a national committeewoman.

BRONSON: We had, between conventions, a conference of the western states, and this was for the purpose of formulating what the West would like to see go into the national platform of the next convention. I was named chairman of the committee on water. I am no water expert, but we had plenty of experts from various parts of the country to advise us.

My job was to get agreement among the eleven western states, plus Hawaii and Alaska, which were not yet states, on what we wanted to have go in on the subject of water. This had to be done mainly by correspondence before the conference took place. And you can imagine it was not too easy a task to get agreement among states that had such different situations and different interests.

DOUGLASS: And water is such a complicated subject.

BRONSON: Right. Then, you see, the interests of the northwestern states, which ordinarily had enough water and wanted to retain it, was quite different from the interests of Arizona and California, which were feuding over the Colorado River. And some of the upriver states as well.

We did reach an agreement before the conference began, but the problem I had at the conference was that at least twice, and I think three times, the Los Angeles Water and Power [Department] tried to insert into the report something that had not been agreed upon. They would go to the typist and say, "Here is some last-minute addition." I would catch it, but then the whole thing had to be typed over again. So I was not too happy about that.

DOUGLASS: So they were having input into this conference.

BRONSON: Anybody who had something to say was welcome to come and say it.

DOUGLASS: Where did you hold that conference?

BRONSON: That was in Mesa or Tempe. In Arizona, anyway. Near Phoenix but not in Phoenix.

DOUGLASS: That was a responsibility you undertook as a national committeewoman.

- BRONSON: Well, I was appointed to it. I don't know why they appointed me, except that I had lived in both California and Arizona and I had no personal axe to grind. I think they thought I would be fair.
- DOUGLASS: At what point did you become involved as an attorney for the U.S. Department of Interior?
- BRONSON: That was much later, after my term of office was over. I was not national committeewoman at the time.
- DOUGLASS: I must have the wrong date then. I have '52 to '62.
- BRONSON: That is the total time in which I was in Arizona.
- DOUGLASS: So it was not until about '60 that you worked for the Department of Interior?
- BRONSON: I thought we are going to talk about the conventions?
- DOUGLASS: Oh, we are. I just wanted to make a point that you have an interest in the Indians.
- BRONSON: I had just a personal interest in the Indians.
- DOUGLASS: But you did work for the Department Interior for a while?
- BRONSON: Yes. But I would like to talk about that after the politics are over.

DOUGLASS: Fine. Would you now like to talk about the conventions then?

BRONSON: The first convention I went to was the year that nobody knew for sure whether [President Harry S.] Truman was going to run again or not.

DOUGLASS: That is the one in Chicago in '52.

BRONSON: Yes. He finally announced that he was not going to run. Well, under California law, the delegations have to be set up quite early, and they are voted on by the people in the primary. So a delegation had been set up, pledged to Truman, with practically all of the party brass on it. When he announced that he was not going to run again, then it became necessary to set up another delegation, but time was short in which to do it. Now the rule is that if everybody on the original delegation--every single person--agrees to go on to the new delegation, then it is not necessary to get the thousands of signatures which otherwise are required to put the delegation on the ballot.

[Governor Edmund S.] Pat Brown [Sr.], the governor, decided to try to qualify a delegation pledged to himself as a favorite son. But there were at least four of us who did not wish to go

on that kind of delegation. Not because we had anything against Pat Brown, but just because we didn't know where the delegation would eventually cast its votes. One of the four was James Roosevelt. Another was [] Blackie Lundsford, who came from the International Rubberworkers Union, and myself. I can't remember who the fourth person was. But, at all events, Pat Brown called me on the telephone and did not say I was the only holdout but sort of implied that. By that time, we had all four gone over to the [U.S. Senator Estes] Kefauver delegation. I informed him that I was taking his call in Kefauver headquarters, [at] which I could hear him sort of gulp over the telephone.

At all events, it was the Kefauver delegation that won in the primary in California. So those of us who had gone onto it were all delegates to the convention. The rest of the party brass was out in left field. They were not on any delegation.

DOUGLASS: Could the fourth person have been Senator George Miller [Jr.]?

BRONSON: I just don't remember.

DOUGLASS: Because he supported Kefauver. I picked that up.

BRONSON: Yes. There were people who were already on the Kefauver delegation.

DOUGLASS: You were originally on the Truman [delegation]. This is a matter of how you switched.

BRONSON: That's right. There was a Democratic woman, whose name I also cannot remember, who was already on the Kefauver delegation, who very graciously gave up her place to me so that I could go as a full delegate instead of as an alternate. She thought that because of my position in the party I ought to be a full delegate.

DOUGLASS: That was the convention at which there was a fire on the floor?

BRONSON: That's right. It was the day on which they held demonstrations and, at that time, marched up and down the aisles and had banners and all kinds of paper things. The floor was just about knee-deep with waste paper. Usually, on that day a recess is called at noon, and all the paper is cleared out from the floor. But because they wanted to get through a certain amount of

business that day, they did not hold a recess, and someone dropped a lighted cigarette.

The people up in the galleries could see the smoke curling up, and they were just petrified. The seats were so close together and nailed to the floor that I thought if there were a panic, it might be a very serious thing. I considered would I rather be burned to death or trampled to death? I decided that I would rather be burned to death, so I stood up on top of the seats where I could see what was going on.

But people behaved very well. The men took off their coats and beat on the fire. They had some fire equipment just outside and rushed that in. So it was put out without causing any injuries or anything else. It was a rather harrowing first experience at a convention.

DOUGLASS: It would be terrifying. Any other comments about that convention? Was it exciting to see [Governor Adlai E.] Stevenson emerge the winner?

BRONSON: Yes. But I did not play any great part in that first convention because it takes you about one convention to learn enough about what is going on, to learn the ropes, so to speak. I attended

the caucuses of the California delegation. I sat in my seat on the floor, and, one day, I sat there for sixteen hours in order to permit my alternate to circulate around the floor. I had the worst sore throat I think I have ever had. It was hard to get food. A convention is, really, if you do any work at it or even if you don't, a pretty taxing physical experience.

DOUGLASS: I imagine it is. At that time, you were the vice chair for southern California. And Glenn Anderson, I believe, was the chairman.

BRONSON: I think that is right. Ordinarily, alternately they have a chairman from the south and a vice chairman from the north or vice versa. But because Helen Gahagan Douglas took both the national committeewoman's place and the other, it was not working quite as it usually did.

DOUGLASS: Do you want to go to the '56 convention now?

BRONSON: Yes. The '56 convention was also held in Chicago. Because I was a national committeewoman, I was automatically a delegate to that convention. That was the convention when Stevenson threw the nomination of his running mate open to the convention, which was not expected. It caused a great deal of

commotion when it took place. I had just gotten to bed at two o'clock in the morning when I had a call from the Kefauver headquarters, wanting to know if I could come right over. I said, "Give me five minutes to put my clothes back on and I will be over."

When I got there, Kefauver asked me if I thought I could swing Arizona to him for the vice presidential position. I said, "I don't know, but I will try."

DOUGLASS: You had probably gotten to know him because you had supported him before?

BRONSON: Yes. As a matter of fact, Arizona did vote for Kefauver. But I was very struck at that convention by [U.S. Senator] John [F.] Kennedy, because he made a very fine speech, one of the nominating speeches for Stevenson. I placed him in my mind as a coming man who was going to make his mark. So after that, every time I was in Washington, I used to stop by his senatorial office just to say hello and pass the time of day. He always saw me. That was the way I developed my further knowledge of Kennedy.

DOUGLASS: He was cordial and receptive when you stopped by?

BRONSON: Yes. I was invited once to a party at the Kennedys' house in Georgetown. Just a social event. But, to go back to the '56 convention . . .

DOUGLASS: First of all, you didn't support Stevenson?

BRONSON: I supported him the first time he ran.

DOUGLASS: Not in '56? The second convention, you were not supporting Stevenson, right?

BRONSON: I supported him that time, but I didn't support him in '60. One reason why I didn't support him in '60 was that his campaign was such a chaotic campaign, so poorly organized. It seemed to me if he could not organize a campaign any better than that. . . . I held him to be a brilliant man, but I was not sure he would be a good executive.

DOUGLASS: All right. Anything more about the '56 convention then? As a national committeewoman, did you have any special role at the convention?

BRONSON: The one perquisite which the national committeeman or committeewoman had is that they get the use of a car and a driver at a convention. This is necessary because you have to go rapidly from one place to another place. I always filled my car with other people who

were going the same place I was. Some of the committeewomen did this, and others went in solitary grandeur. But, at all events, I was not on any committee of the convention. I was somewhat active in meeting various people.

DOUGLASS: You are supposed to be at certain receptions?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. And there are lots of parties, but if you go to very many of these parties, you don't get any other kind of work done.

DOUGLASS: It must be exhausting any way you do it.

BRONSON: Yes. It is. It certainly is.

DOUGLASS: Anything more about the '56 convention because we can go on to the '60 convention?

BRONSON: I think that is about all about the '56.

DOUGLASS: I am looking at the choices at that convention. [U.S.] Senator] Hubert [H.] Humphrey was among them. This would be the vice presidential choices. Any recollections about Humphrey?

BRONSON: He was a very staunch liberal, but he tended to talk too much.

DOUGLASS: What was it about Kefauver that drew you?

BRONSON: Initially, you see, in that '52 convention, if I wasn't going to go on that delegation pledged to Pat Brown, as favorite son, then, if I was to go at all, I would have to go on some other

delegation. Kefauver had stood for some things I was very much for. He had tried to make war against some very powerful special interests. I was interested in that. Also, his delegation seemed the most likely to win.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

BRONSON: Once when I was national committeewoman--I don't remember what year--he came to Tucson to speak. At the beginning of his speech, he said that he was glad to see Mrs. Bronson there. That I had once had written a speech for him on education. He said, "I still use it. Sometimes I begin at the beginning and go to the end. Sometimes I begin at the end and go back to beginning. If I am pressed for time, I begin in the middle and go both ways." [Laughter]

DOUGLASS: That is a great story. You had written it for him?

BRONSON: Oh, yes.

DOUGLASS: How did that happen that you wrote a speech for him?

BRONSON: It was when I was working at the Library of Congress. We did not like to write speeches for members of congress, but sometimes we did it. He had asked for a speech on education. I was the one who was assigned to do it.

DOUGLASS: Do you recall what it addressed, generally? The theme?

BRONSON: No. I don't remember the theme now. What we used to do if we got an assignment to do a

speech for a member of congress--at least this was the way I did it--was to go over to his office and find out the general content of what he wanted in the speech. Then I would try to imitate the style of the congressman as best I could and then take it over and go over it with him after it was completed. As I say, we really didn't feel that was our job at the Library of Congress. It was a little difficult to turn it down, however. We didn't do very much of it.

DOUGLASS: I didn't realize that. I suppose you have the problem of when is it a political speech and when is it an informational speech?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Anything else about Kefauver?

BRONSON: He was very careful to keep in touch with his supporters. For instance, if he went on a trip to a foreign country, you would generally get a postcard from him from somewhere in that country. I think he did more of this than other politicians that I have known.

DOUGLASS: All right. Do you want to move to the '60 convention?

BRONSON: Yes. Before it took place, when Kennedy was seeking the nomination, he traveled around to

various states to speak. As soon as he announced his candidacy, I endorsed him. I wrote out the press release myself and took it myself over to the Associated Press. They seemed impressed that I had come myself. I don't know why.

Anyway, it was not in the precedent of Arizona to do this. The precedent was that the state chairman, who was favoring [U.S. Senator Stuart S.] Symington, and the national committeemen and women did not make an endorsement until after the primary. But I figured if you are a leader, you are supposed to lead. So I did this. It was a departure. I was the first national committeewoman west of the Mississippi [River] to endorse Kennedy.

So when he came to the state, I was the person who took him around. The day began with a breakfast in Flagstaff. Then he flew to Yuma, and he invited me to fly with him in his plane, the Caroline. But I couldn't do it because the clothes that I was to wear at the big dinner in the evening were back in my home in Sedona. I got another Democratic woman from Flagstaff to go in my place. That night we had a big dinner

BRONSON: in Phoenix. Between times, he was going to various television stations, from place to place to place.

He was the one that was always on the lookout to make sure I had a place in the automobiles and so on. It was not his responsibility, but he did it, nevertheless. So I had a chance to talk with him some. We talked about Russia, where I had been two years previously. And China. Various things of this sort.

When the convention took place, as a matter of fact, Arizona did cast all of its seventeen votes for John Kennedy. This was not important in the number of votes, but it was useful because Arizona was early in the balloting and could, therefore, yield to some state with more importance.

At that convention, I served on the platform committee. This was a very interesting experience. Each state has, I think, one person on the platform committee. They meet a week before the convention takes place, wherever the convention city is. During that week, anybody who wants to have something to say, any group or

individual that wants to advocate something they want to have in the platform, can appear before the committee and say their piece. Then the committee goes into executive session and hammers out the planks of the platform.

During that time of hammering out the planks, I was very impressed with the delegates from the South, because they were wanting things in the platform that they knew they could not possibly get in. Yet, their presentations were so clear and well presented that it was just a pleasure to listen to them.

DOUGLASS: They were smooth then?

BRONSON: It was more than being smooth. It was a very clear presentation, but you also felt it was their own convictions that they were expressing.

DOUGLASS: They didn't win on a lot of those?

BRONSON: No. They knew they were not going to win and everybody else knew they were not going to win.

DOUGLASS: Can you remember one of the things that they pitched for? What sort of things would they be arguing for?

BRONSON: They were things southern conservatives would want to put in.

DOUGLASS: Were there any outstanding actors in that platform committee that year? Any people?

BRONSON: I don't remember any specific people. There were people who. . . . For example, the results of this conference that I spoke about, there were things that the West wanted to have get in.

DOUGLASS: The water conference?

BRONSON: Well, it went beyond the water. There were many other issues that the West wanted to get in, and most of them did. It was more of a general discussion than it was any big fights over anything.

DOUGLASS: Did you get a sense of regional pulls? The eastern states wanted some things and the western states wanted others?

BRONSON: Yes. There was some of that, but I think more organized work had been done in the West than in other regions. So we had a definite agenda. But, of course, there are regional interests.

DOUGLASS: That must have been a fascinating experience.

BRONSON: Yes. I enjoyed it very much.

DOUGLASS: That is about a week's worth of work?

BRONSON: Yes. We were there for a week before the convention. It is very difficult with a huge body of people like a convention to make changes

in the platform on the floor. It occasionally happens but not very often. So the real work on the platform is done by the platform committee.

DOUGLASS: When that went to the floor, do you recall whether there were any reactions in opposition? Were there some demonstrations on the floor about some of the platform?

BRONSON: No. I don't think there were that year. There have been sometimes.

DOUGLASS: Do you remember who chaired that convention? I was just curious, thinking about your platform getting delivered up and, of course, having to be put on the floor.

BRONSON: I don't seem to remember who presided that time.

DOUGLASS: That's quite a job, isn't it?

BRONSON: Yes. It is. I remember very well one convention, I don't remember which one it was, that I had loaned my national committeewoman's badge to somebody who needed to get on the floor to consult with someone. I was outside the convention hall and all I had on was a press badge. Suddenly, my name was called from the podium, "Will Mrs. Bronson please come to the podium." I had not been told that there was anything I was going to be asked to do. I had

no idea why they were calling for me, and I could not get in because I didn't have the right kind of badge. I would tell the people at the door, "You hear them calling me. This is who I am." It didn't do the least bit of good.

Somebody smuggled me in a back way to the back of the platform. Up there somebody thrust a piece of paper in my hand and said, "Go out and read this." It was a resolution. I cast a hasty glance at the resolution to make sure it was harmless, which it was. Then I went out. On these platforms, instead of adjusting the microphone to the person, they adjust the person to the microphone. I didn't know this. I stepped up to the podium, and I started going down, down, down. I thought, "I will be reading this resolution in the cellar." That is a personal recollection I have of one of the conventions. [Laughter]

DOUGLASS: [Laughter] You are not very tall. I thought you would have been brought up.

BRONSON: No. I went down.

DOUGLASS: So that is your claim to fame. You read a resolution in front of a convention.

BRONSON: I think every person I knew in the entire United States was watching the convention and for months and months afterwards people would say to me, "Where were you?"

At that convention, Kennedy had the best organized people working for him that I have ever seen in any political gathering. Each delegation had someone from the Kennedy staff assigned to them to talk with them about anything that was bothering them and keep them in line. They had a file card on every delegate with background information about them. It was really remarkable.

DOUGLASS: When you went around Arizona with Kennedy that time, do you remember what staff was working with him?

BRONSON: There were not many people working with him on that occasion. He was still seeking the nomination.

DOUGLASS: I understand. I was curious whether he had somebody with him who was handling some things for him.

BRONSON: I don't remember there being much of anybody. He was in his own private plane going from place to place. I remember that I introduced all of

the people who were at the breakfast meeting to him. I felt very pleased because I was able to speak each person's name. The microphone went out of order, which happens quite frequently at political meetings.

DOUGLASS: Did you feel when you saw him out there in the hustings that he was charismatic?

BRONSON: Oh, yes. He was. I don't remember that very many other national candidates came to Arizona because it was such a small state. At that time, the population was not nearly what it is now. He was one of the few to come.

DOUGLASS: Mrs. Bronson, you have some notes here on the convention. It would appear they have something to do with what happened on the floor. They read, "Alabama held back votes to be able to show increased strength on the second ballot if needed. Alabama gave twenty votes to [U.S. Senator Lyndon B.] Johnson, three and a half to Kennedy. Arizona gave all seventeen to Kennedy." Do you recall why you wrote that?

BRONSON: Well, I think I was showing how things went as far as Arizona was concerned.

DOUGLASS: All right. First, Alabama was called. They didn't vote.

BRONSON: They passed.

DOUGLASS: But Arizona cast all their votes on the first ballot.

BRONSON: I don't think it ever got beyond the first ballot. I have said that they held back.

DOUGLASS: Oh, so they might be able to show an increase.

You also have a note that Kennedy was in Arizona before the primary. You have Udall, [William] Bill Mahoney and Leisa.

BRONSON: Those were the people who were more or less in charge of his campaign when the actual campaign came to Arizona. Bill Mahoney was from Phoenix. He was an attorney. He was later appointed ambassador to Ghana. Stewart Udall was in Tucson. He was appointed secretary of the interior. Leisa was in northern Arizona and in charge of the Phoenix [state] headquarters and neither asked nor got any appointment. I didn't ask for anything at that time, and I want to make that clear.

DOUGLASS: All right. These were the three people who were working for Kennedy in Arizona, leading the effort.

BRONSON: That's right.

DOUGLASS: This is leading up to the convention, some of what you are talking about here.

BRONSON: There I was talking about after he was nominated. The campaign itself.

DOUGLASS: After he was elected, did you have any contacts or feedback from Kennedy?

BRONSON: We exchanged letters quite frequently before he was elected and somewhat after he was elected. I remember the letter I wrote, saying that I thought the country was ready for a "blood, sweat, and tears" kind of inaugural speech. I imagine there were many other people saying the same sort of thing, so I am not claiming any credit for the content of that speech. But I put in my two cents. He did say, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country." So I was pleased.

DOUGLASS: Did you go to the inauguration?

BRONSON: I didn't go. I was invited. I was not able to go, but I have all the invitations framed.

DOUGLASS: You must have watched it with great interest.

BRONSON: Oh, I did.

DOUGLASS: Did you ever meet any of the family?

BRONSON: I met [Jacqueline Bouvier] Jackie [Kennedy] that time I was invited to their home in Georgetown.

She was there. They had moved all the furniture back against the walls to make standing room, because the house was not a very big house. She was flitting around, chatting with everybody.

DOUGLASS: Was that the first time you had met her?

BRONSON: It was the only time.

DOUGLASS: What was your impression of her?

BRONSON: I didn't get to talk to her for any length, so I didn't have any particular impression. She was a good hostess, but beyond that I didn't have any talk with her about ideas or anything of that sort.

DOUGLASS: She was young, too.

BRONSON: Of course, she is beautiful.

DOUGLASS: Anything more about the '60 convention and campaign that you would like to comment on?

BRONSON: I don't think of anything in particular. Their campaign was very well run, just as their organization at the convention was very good. In Arizona, our chief problem was getting enough campaign literature and signs to meet the demand.

DOUGLASS: How did it go in Arizona? I would have thought that Nixon would have had a certain appeal in

Arizona? Were you at all concerned or did you feel you had a good chance?

BRONSON: We didn't have any great concern.

DOUGLASS: That's interesting, considering the Goldwater reputation and influence. He certainly was working for Nixon.

BRONSON: I don't remember Nixon as being very popular in Arizona. Goldwater was popular because he was an Arizonan of a very good family which had been for years active in politics and originally had been Democratic. He was popular for those kinds of reasons.

DOUGLASS: So you didn't feel you had a fight on your hands. Anytime there is an election one has to worry.

BRONSON: That's right. Well, you have to worry and work.

DOUGLASS: Did you do a lot of Get-Out-The-Vote work?

BRONSON: I was in charge of the state headquarters for Kennedy. I stayed in Phoenix throughout the campaign. They did pay my hotel expenses on this occasion.

DOUGLASS: What sorts of things were you doing?

BRONSON: Getting out mailings, getting the materials to the various counties, arranging for speeches.

Oh, all the kinds of things you do in a campaign.

DOUGLASS: Did he come through again and speak?

BRONSON: No.

DOUGLASS: Did you do a lot of Get-Out-The-Vote work when it came right up to the election?

BRONSON: That was up to the particular county. I think we did a good deal in Phoenix, but I can't speak for all the other counties because they were running their own show. I didn't get around outside of Phoenix because I was in charge of the headquarters there.

DOUGLASS: You were in charge of headquarters for that area, or for the state?

BRONSON: For the state.

DOUGLASS: So you were dealing with the overall publications, overall things that were going on. Did you like doing that?

BRONSON: It is awfully hard work. You work about sixteen hours a day every day. But, of course, I was eager to see Kennedy elected, so I was happy to do that. The only thing I didn't like was that political headquarters seem to attract people who are mentally unbalanced. It seemed to me I always got those people to deal with.

DOUGLASS: They would wander in?

BRONSON: They would wander in and would want to do volunteer work. We had them here in California when I was in the headquarters there, and we had them also at Phoenix. Not a lot, but when they came, I seemed to be the one that had to handle the situation.

DOUGLASS: Give just an example of a problem that you might have had to deal with.

BRONSON: There was a man in Los Angeles who came in, and he had a thirty-two page letter about what he considered to be some spy activity in California. This was during the war when Roosevelt was president. He was trying to get this letter to the president. He had sold his little car to have money enough to go to Washington. Of course, he did not get to see the president. He was handed from office to office. Finally, somebody gave him the money to come back home.

He wanted to get this letter now to Helen Gahagan Douglas because he knew that she knew the president well. He wanted to get her address to send it to her. Well, we would not give him her address. I asked him, "If you will

give me the letter to read, I will take it home and read it tonight. Then you could come again tomorrow I will tell you what I think about it." He did not give me the letter. I said that I had an appointment in five minutes outside the building. When I left the building, there he was, waiting on the sidewalk to see whether I had told him the truth, whether I was going to my meeting. Then he thrust the whole thing into my briefcase. I was not sure whether it was just the letter he was putting in or a bomb or something beside.

I did read it all. There was just enough in the letter that might have had a little bit of truth to it. When he came back, I said, "There are some very smart people over at the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. How would you like to take your letter over to them?" "Fine," he said, "fine." So he departed with his letter and I then called the FBI and said, "There is someone on his way." And I never saw him again.

DOUGLASS: So you would have people come into the Phoenix headquarters who were a little off?

BRONSON: That's right. One of them, when I would not do what he wanted me to do, roared at me that I was [Adolf] Hitler.

DOUGLASS: Well, problem clients. I guess they are in every institution, particularly where you have volunteers who can walk in.

If there is nothing else about that period, I did at least want to get on the record that you did work as an attorney for the U.S. Department of Interior.

BRONSON: That came later, after I had finished my term as national committeewoman. One of my daughters became ill with an illness which was very expensive to treat and which I had no way of knowing whether it would last all her life or not. So I then felt justified in asking whether there were any jobs that I could get, so I would have some funds to meet this situation.

Well, my qualifications did not quite fit into the civil service requirements for some of the jobs that might have been open. The secretary of the interior, Stewart Udall, had just two or three appointments that he could make of his own choice. He gave me one of those appointments.

I think in the office of the field solicitor where I worked that the staff there, when they heard it was a political appointment, thought that I would not be any good. I would be incompetent or lazy or something of this sort. They didn't let me know this at the time, of course. But I went there, and I worked hard, as I tried to do at any job that I have had. I always got the top efficiency rating.

DOUGLASS: Were you working as a lawyer there?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: What were your responsibilities?

BRONSON: I asked to be assigned, as much as possible, to cases that related to American Indians. We also did work for the Bureau of Land Management. So I could not work all the time on Indian matters, but I did most of the time.

DOUGLASS: Could you give an example of an Indian matter you might have dealt with? A kind of typical sort of thing.

BRONSON: We were supposed to confine our work to things that affected a whole tribe, such as the establishment of borders of the reservation, to see if there was any question about those. Some domestic problems. Things like roads or

encroachment of a white man on Indian land. Things of this sort.

It is very intricate because you have to consult so many different sources. You have to consult federal law, state law, and tribal law. Treaties, if there are any. The opinions of the United States attorney general and the opinions of the secretary of the interior, which have the force of law. You have to consult all those different things before you can proceed.

I remember one case where a white man's sheep were encroaching on an Indian's land. We prepared the case and sent it to Washington. And they didn't act and they didn't act, and by the time they did act, the sheep had done their damage and were long gone. While we were supposed to confine our work to that sort of thing, we would not turn away any Indian who came to us for help. If we couldn't help ourselves, we would tell them where to go to get help.

DOUGLASS: So sometimes it would be an individual problem?

BRONSON: Occasionally. I got some of those, too. Do you want me to give that?

DOUGLASS: If you could give an example of that.

BRONSON: There was an Indian woman who was in her eighties who did not live on a reservation, but lived in one of the towns in central Arizona. She bought an automobile which she could not drive herself, but her nephew drove it for her. She was buying this on time, and what she was paying included the insurance.

Her nephew wrapped the car around a telephone pole one Saturday night. The dealer in Phoenix repossessed the car, even though she was right up to date on her payments, and told her she could not have it back unless she paid three hundred dollars in repairs. I went and examined the papers in the dealer's office, and I went to the finance company office. I found they had changed the insurance on her, without notifying her, so it protected the dealer and it protected the finance company, but it no longer protected the woman.

DOUGLASS: So she was liable.

BRONSON: We wrote a letter on official stationery and said, "Such-and-such facts have come to our attention. And knowing your high standing as a dealer in Phoenix, we are sure you will want to make this right. Will you please notify us by

such-and-such a date what steps you are taking in the matter." So she got her car back without paying three hundred dollars, but if she had not had someone to go to bat for her, she probably would have lost her car.

DOUGLASS: What were your general impressions about the status of the Indians and how they were treated?

BRONSON: They are exploited just as much today as they ever were. Maybe in somewhat different ways. For instance, there has been oil on some of the Indian lands up in the Northwest. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which we were not part of and I'd like to make this clear--we were independent--but the Bureau of Indian Affairs had entered into a contract with the oil company. And the oil company would take out more oil than they reported so that the Indians would not get the amount of royalties they were entitled to.

DOUGLASS: You are talking northern Arizona.

BRONSON: No. I am talking about the Northwest. There is so much exploitation of one sort or another that the Arizona papers some years ago did a series of exposés, not just of the Indian's treatment

in Arizona but in other parts of the country as well.

DOUGLASS: I was more specifically wanting to know what your impression was right there where you were working. I think you have pretty well answered that.

BRONSON: I have never met an Indian who did not hate the Bureau of Indian Affairs with a passion.

DOUGLASS: That says a lot right there.

All right. You worked a couple of years for the Department of Interior, and then you went back to California.

BRONSON: That is my recollection.

DOUGLASS: I have it that you returned to Claremont in '63.

BRONSON: I thought it was '62.

DOUGLASS: The end of '62. It could have been.

BRONSON: This was because of my daughter's illness. I felt I should come back and provide a home for her, which I did.

DOUGLASS: Did you open a book business here in Claremont?

BRONSON: Yes. I had an out-of-print book business (that is quite different from a current book business) on Foothill Boulevard. At first, it was in my home because I could work at that and still be free if my daughter needed me. I got special

permission for what they call a "cottage industry." I did most of it by mail at that time because I was not allowed to put any kind of a sign in front of my house. I had a great many books that I had collected myself when I was in Arizona, so I had a stock to start with.

When I moved into the [Mt. San Antonio] Gardens [Retirement Home] in '64, I had to decide whether I would give up this business or whether I would continue it in a regular shop, because I could not carry it on from the Gardens. So for about six years I had this out-of-print bookstore. That was interesting.

DOUGLASS: That was on Foothill [Boulevard]?

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: Where on Foothill?

BRONSON: It was near Wolfe's Market. It was in the same building that the League of Women Voters now has its office.

DOUGLASS: Between Harvard and Yale, near Wolfe's.

BRONSON: It was in the next block west of Wolfe's.

DOUGLASS: How did you happen to do that? Had you always been collecting books?

BRONSON: I collected a lot of books in Arizona. I have always been a great reader myself. I came to

know most of the out-of-print book dealers in Arizona, so I learned something about the business from them. As I say, it was something I could do that would not tie me down to regular hours.

DOUGLASS: Was that a fairly successful business?

BRONSON: I didn't make much money from it, but I made a little. I really didn't expect to make a lot.

DOUGLASS: Let me ask you a little bit about Democratic clubs because you were president of the local Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club. Over the years, going way back to the forties, we talked a little about the Democratic clubs. As you look at what was going on in the sixties and coming on up forward, is the nature of the club movement quite different from what you saw in the forties and fifties?

BRONSON: There was an organization called CDC, which stands for California Democratic Council, and it was very active in forming new clubs. There were clubs in existence before, but there were lots of clubs formed. Then Vietnam came along, and this caused a split in the Democratic party statewide and also in the clubs.

One of the reasons that it caused a split was that at that time CDC had an extremely vocal president who made very extreme statements to the press and media. Governor Brown [Sr.] asked that this man resign. He would not resign until he got a vote of no confidence from CDC itself. Meanwhile, some of the clubs had the issue of whether they would continue permanent affiliation with CDC.

DOUGLASS: This was [Simon] Casady you are talking about.

BRONSON: Yes.

DOUGLASS: That all came to a head in '65.

BRONSON: Some of the clubs wanted to continue as permanent members of CDC. Others wanted to vote each year as to whether they would affiliate or not. This was an issue on which various clubs had difficulty. The Eleanor Roosevelt Club, before that, had been the Pomona Valley Democratic Women's Club.

DOUGLASS: Right.

BRONSON: They split into two groups.

DOUGLASS: They were founded in '58. Then in '66 you had the Eleanor Roosevelt Club.

BRONSON: One became the Eleanor Roosevelt and one became the Frances Reed Club.

DOUGLASS: You were with the Eleanor Roosevelt Club.

BRONSON: Yes. The Eleanor Roosevelt Club felt that Democrats should be inclusive and should focus on electing Democratic candidates. And the Frances Reed was focused more on issues.

And, also, there were other Democratic clubs in the area. For example, the Claremont Democratic Club was formed in 1953 and is still in existence today.

DOUGLASS: Is that what we call the Jerry Voorhis Claremont Democratic Club?

BRONSON: Yes. It changed its name after Jerry Voorhis' death to the Jerry Voorhis Claremont Democratic Club.

DOUGLASS: Now do you belong to the Eleanor Roosevelt Club and the Jerry Voorhis Club? How do you do that?

BRONSON: The Eleanor Roosevelt Club and the Frances Reed Club are neither of them in existence today.

DOUGLASS: I see. They are out of business. Now it is the Voorhis Democratic club.

BRONSON: That was a different club altogether. It had nothing to do with being a women's club.

DOUGLASS: Oh, I see.

BRONSON: The Eleanor Roosevelt club and the Frances Reed club were both women's clubs.

DOUGLASS: They don't exist anymore.

BRONSON: They don't exist.

DOUGLASS: So the general club is the Voorhis club.

BRONSON: Yes, in Claremont. The other clubs went further than Claremont. They were Pomona Valley clubs. Although a great many of their members were from Claremont, they were not just a Claremont club.

DOUGLASS: Let me ask you about a few women. Did you know Rosalind Wyman through your work in the Democratic party earlier?

BRONSON: I knew her but not very well. One of the women I wanted to mention was Mrs. [Thomas F.] Tom Ford, the wife of the congressman. They were very good friends of Jerry Voorhis also. Whenever she was in town in Los Angeles, she was very active in Democratic work.

There was a girl named [] Weiss. I forget her first name. It may have been Edith. She did a lot of publicity work. Of course, Mrs. Ford is not now living. I don't know about Mrs. Weiss. As I am now in my nineties, names escape me, as has been evident.

DOUGLASS: Did you ever run into Carmen Warschaw? Were you ever involved with her?

BRONSON: I knew her, but I was not terribly impressed
with her.

DOUGLASS: I know you have to conclude now. Thank you for
your time.

BRONSON: You are quite welcome.

[End Session 2]

[End Tape 2, Side B]

APPENDIX

Work in the Legislative Reference Service

Comments by Leisa G. Bronson

Perhaps you would like to know how research is conducted by the Library of Congress. In the first place the Library is just what the name indicates--the Library of Congress. It exists primarily to supply information and materials to members of Congress and their staffs and to Congressional committees. Constituents may also be served but only if they channel their inquiries through a Congressional office which in turn sends them along to us. We answer them willingly except in two cases: school children who want help with their term papers and speeches for Congressmen. We think that schools should teach children to do their own research and that political speeches should be written by Congressional staffs. So we avoid the latter as much as possible.

It is sort of a game to see how much of our work appears in the Congressional Record, of course under the name of a congressman.

There are certain traditions in the service. One of these is that there is no factual question to which we cannot produce an answer. This is sometimes sorely tested, an example being the time I was asked how many pounds of horsemeat are consumed in various European countries per

year. I think I found the only man in the city of Washington who knew the answer to that one. He was in the Department of Agriculture.

The service is divided up into sections, such as foreign affairs, economics, agriculture and so forth and each person in a section had a specialty. I was in the economics section, my speciality being monopolies and cartels. Every inquiry on these subjects came across my desk. However, because of the flow of the work, we could not stick to our specialities. If a bill was up for debate in the House or Senate, we would get a flood of inquiries on that particular subject and have to be flexible enough to deal with whatever comes.

Here I would like to say a word about Civil Service. I was brought up to believe that job appointments made through Civil Service are far superior to those made through the political process, but this is not always the case. Civil Service does not take account of personal characteristics which are often so important to success in a job. Moreover, if you get a dud, it is almost impossible to get rid of the a person, other than by passing him/her along to some other agency. For example, we once had a woman who was supposed to be an agricultural expert. One day she whispered into my ear, "What kind of animal does veal come from?" The library is not under Civil Service at this time but does follow

Civil Service rules. Eventually we passed her along to the Department of Agriculture.

Another of the traditions of the service was that no one reading the reports should be able to determine the personal opinions of the writer of the report. Every work of importance is read by three persons for accuracy and objectivity.

It is interesting to note how members of Congress make use of the service. Some use it very little, some use it a lot. Some want to know the pros and cons on a given issue. Others want only material that boosts whatever position they have already decided to take. Occasionally we would get a telephone call from some Senatorial office which said, "The Senator is now speaking on the floor. Before he finishes he wants to know this and this and this." Everyone would then drop whatever they were doing and rush to get the information to the Senator.

The scope of the work varies greatly. It may be a simple question which can be answered within a few minutes. Or it may be what amounts to a monograph taking several weeks to prepare. Each section has a head who assigns the work and is responsible to the overall director of the service.

The most difficult place from which I secure information, especially in wartime, is naturally the

Pentagon. To facilitate this a retired general and a retired admiral were added to our staff for the duration of the war to secure for us routine information.

In all I feel it is an efficient service doing a worthwhile job. It is a fascinating place to work because of its variety and because there is so much of interest to learn.

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