

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

PAUL GANN

Founder, President, People's Advocate, Inc. 1974 - 1989

September 28, October 19, November 24, 1987
and June 28, 1988
Sacramento, California

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

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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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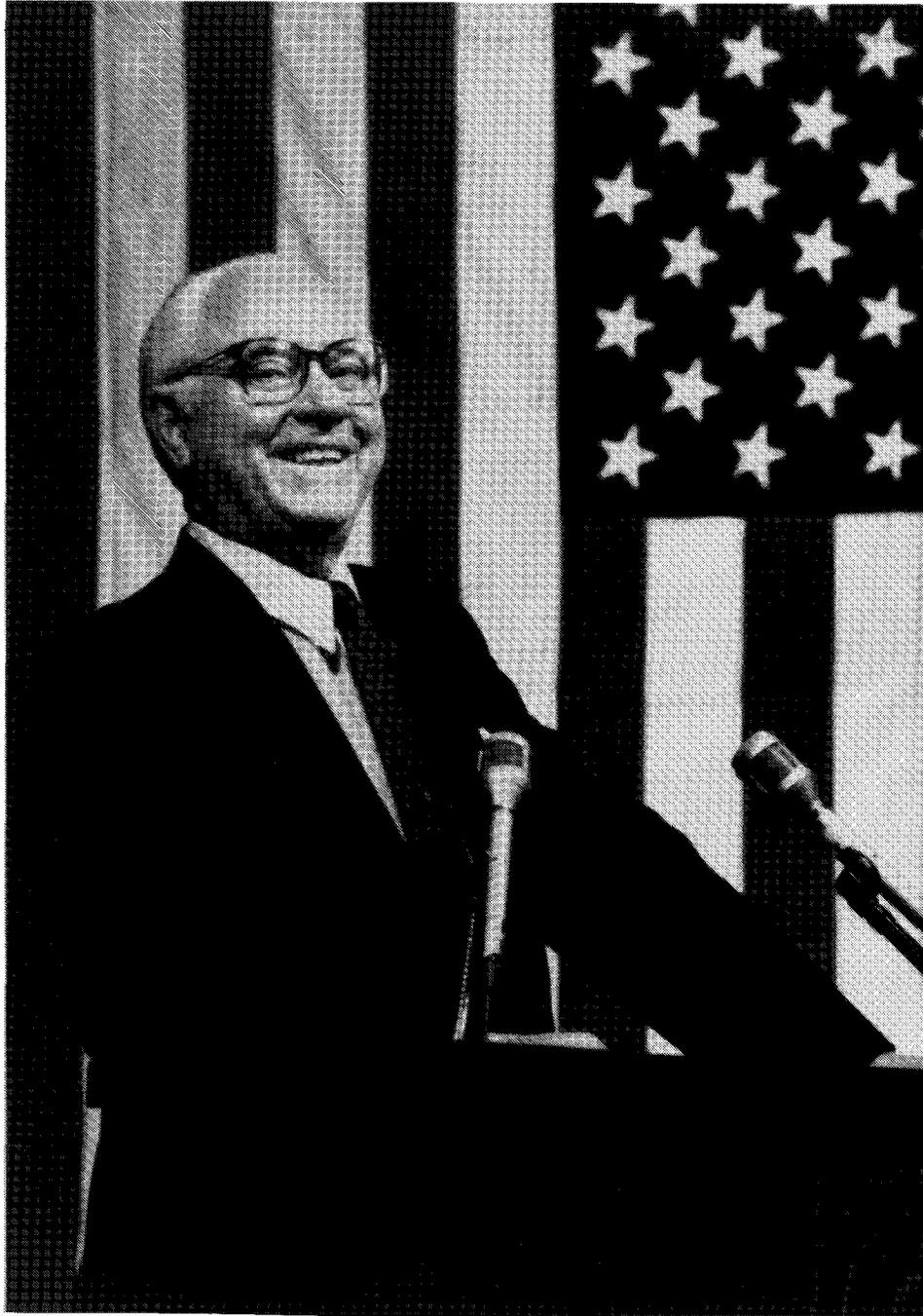
Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

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

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

This interview is printed on acid-free paper.



PAUL GANN

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer/Editor:

Gabrielle Morris
Director, University of California at Berkeley State Archives
State Government Oral History Program
Director, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era Project
B.A. Connecticut College (economics)
Graduate studies, Trinity College, Stanford University

Interview Time and Place:

September 28, 1987: People's Advocate, Inc., office of Paul Gann, Sacramento, California. Session of one hour.
October 19, 1987: People's Advocate, Inc., office of Paul Gann, Sacramento, California. Session of one and one half hours.
November 24, 1987: People's Advocate, Inc., office of Paul Gann, Sacramento, California. Session of one hour.
June 28, 1988: People's Advocate, Inc., office of Paul Gann, Sacramento, California. Session of one half hour.

Editing:

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

On March 31, 1988, Mr. Gann was forwarded a copy of the edited transcript for his approval. On June 28, 1988, the interviewer paid a follow-up call to determine the status of Gann's review, and a brief additional interview was recorded.

In a telephone conversation on July 31, 1988, Ted Costa, Gann's aide, verbally gave Gann's approval for completion of the transcript from the Regional Oral History Office file copy.

Papers

Some records of People's Advocate, Inc., and papers from Gann's 1980 campaign for the United States Senate are deposited in the State Library in Sacramento, California. These were consulted in preparing for the interview.

Tapes and Interview Records

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

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Born in Glenn County, Arkansas, in 1912, Paul Gann was one of twelve children. His father was a Church of the Nazarene minister and part-time farmer; his mother a schoolteacher. Gann graduated from high school in 1928, but gave up a dream of college and law school because of hard times. He married in 1931, and in 1935 he and wife Nell moved to California where he was a salesman and automobile dealer and they raised four children.

Although he was unable to enlist in the military in World War II due to a childhood horseback-riding injury that left him with chronic osteomyelitis, he worked for the Army Corps of Engineers as a civilian. When the osteomyelitis recurred after a construction accident, Gann was treated with penicillin, then still in the experimental stage, and the bone injury was at last cured.

In 1952 and 1956 he was a volunteer for fellow-southerner Estes Kefauver's campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination. Later, Gann ran for a seat on the Modesto City Council. After business reverses, he relocated near Sacramento and by 1968 was active in the Del Paso Heights Parents Patrol. While organizing residents to combat crime, he became concerned about the shabby way they were treated by government.

Widespread response to this concern led to the founding of People's Advocate, Inc., in 1974. With Gann as chief spokesman, this 10,000- to 40,000-member organization became skilled in collecting signatures to qualify initiative ballot measures and developing public support for their passage. The first two tax-limitation measures sponsored by People's Advocate failed at the polls, but its successes include: Proposition 13 (1978), Property Tax Reform (known as the Jarvis-Gann measure after its co-authors); Proposition 4 (1979), Government Spending Reform, known as the "Spirit of 13;" Proposition 8 (1982), Criminal Justice, known as the Victims' Bill of Rights; Proposition 24 (1984), Legislative Reform Act; Proposition 61 (1986), Public Pay Initiative.

A June 1988 People's Advocate measure, Proposition 72, Emergency Reserve, Dedication of Certain Taxes to Transportation, was narrowly defeated. Increasingly, these campaigns have been joined by other citizen groups, business organizations, and individual legislators.

Gann's concern for limiting government spending has included forming the Committee to Cap the National Debt. In 1980 he won the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate and campaigned against veteran incumbent Alan Cranston.

A different crusade, but more crucial personally, is Gann's effort to require notification of local health officials of positive

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome test results. He announced in June 1987 that he himself had contracted this disease after a 1982 blood transfusion. In the fall of 1988, Gann received wide publicity for his support for Proposition 102, one of two ballot measures to institute reporting of infection by the HIV virus. He was also active in opposition to Proposition 99, Cigarette and Tobacco Tax Benefit Fund that year, arguing that the proposed tax increases would encourage bootlegging and other crimes. Proposition 102 was defeated; Proposition 99 was approved by the voters.

[Session 1, September 28, 1987]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

I. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Lessons from Parents; Southern Rural Childhood

MORRIS: As I mentioned, I have been fortunate enough to take a look at some of your papers that you have deposited in the [California] State Library.

GANN: For some reason, we really didn't start conserving things until a couple of years ago. Some things, yes. But we really didn't think about it, to be honest with you.

I try to be a congenial person, but I just always hated to lose because I don't get involved in anything--it may be wrong, I don't say that I'm right--but I say that I believe, in my heart and my head, that I'm right. So therefore, I go out to win. I have to do everything I can. People have told me for years, "Slow down," and, "You've got it made," and I said, "Well, you tell me that twenty minutes after the poll closes and then I'll slow down. Or tell me that I'm going to have all the signatures, we're going to have a million signatures. Tell me when we get 750,000 signatures and then I'll relax."

MORRIS: Is that right? Well, you picked a really tough way to influence public decision, the initiative way and the grass roots way.

GANN: Yes, it is. You know, sometimes, I kid the people occasionally about the fact that we're all ready and willing and able to talk about the bureaucracy but really the bureaucracy would have to be good if we as voters decided we wanted it to be good. [Laughter] Because when I read we had 58 million people that could have voted in the last presidential election that didn't vote, I mean legally were capable of voting, I thought, "Good Lord, you know it's a miracle."

About ten years ago, someone asked me, "Mister Gann, do you believe in God?" Well, I said, "Yes, my dad was a minister and I was raised in that kind of an atmosphere. Of course I believe in God." "Why do you believe there's a God?" And I said, "The deeper I get into politics, the more I know there's a God because if somebody wasn't looking after us, we'd have been gone a long time ago." [Laughter] So it's just . . . I was raised to believe that no elected official is the government, no appointed official is the government; the people are the government. Therefore, to be free, and that's what we are in America, claim to be, is free. But freedom isn't free, and with freedom goes personal and individual responsibility. And the less responsible we as the government happen to be, the less responsible the bureaucracy is going to be. That's history.

MORRIS: Was your father interested and active in local politics and government?

GANN: Only to the extent that he worked with . . . Where I was raised, the farmer sold his corn by the gallon instead of by the bushel, you know. And my dad was in opposition to that and worked with what was known in those days as the Anti-Saloon League [of America], and they were trying to keep those people from getting too much money for their corn, I guess. I don't know. But anyway, he was very active in that, yes.

MORRIS: So that he was talking to you about politics as it affected local issues.

GANN: Yes, and then another thing that he . . . and that's where I got some of the things that I use today. As an example, my dad said to me when I was about ten that, "Son, you were

born free, not because freedom is free but because the preceding generation had courage enough to hang on to freedom, so you could be born. So your greatest obligation as you grow into adulthood will be to do something that you can't do alone. But you do everything within your power to see to it that fifty, sixty, or seventy years from now, a parent or grandparent or great grandparent can pat a ten year old child on the head and say, 'Honey, you were born free.' Not because freedom is free but because your generation had courage enough to hang on to it." And I've never outgrown those little lessons.

MORRIS: It's very important when you have a lesson like that.

GANN: Yes, it is important. I am so proud to be free. We were very poor, it's just that we weren't allowed to be poor. I mean, my mother used to say that, "How can you be poor and be a free American. When you come right down to it, basically. Now, our foreign missionaries know some poor people. But they're in countries where they can't be free and independent. So those are the poor people. Don't ever let your mother hear you talk about being poor."

MORRIS: Because you were living in a rural community where there was enough to eat because people farmed?

GANN: Yes. So, I don't know, and another thing that I've tried to carry through to my family and my children and my grandkids, is very simply that: don't allow an adversary to make you bitter and angry. Because if I'm angry at some of my opposition, I'm not hurting my opposition but I'm hurting the people that I represent because I'm using my energy for something that is not productive. And so I've tried to raise my kids never to carry a grudge. Get it off your chest. If you make a mistake, learn everything you can from the mistake and then bury it. Don't let it eat you up for the next twenty years, because all that does is defeat you.

A real estate broker said to me one time, and he had a reputation--well, his reputation was that if he can irritate you into screaming at him, even calling him a foul name, he will be delighted, he has gotten through to you. He asked me one day, he said, "Paul, why is it that I've never been able to get you angry at me enough to where you yell and

scream and cuss me out?" And I said, "Well, sir, for me to allow you to do that to me would mean that I had complimented you." And I said, "Sir, I never compliment anybody that I don't like." [Laughter]

MORRIS: If you got mad at him, that means that he'd won.

GANN: He'd won. He'd beat me down. Yes. And that's the reason that I work the way I work, even in politics. As an example, the lieutenant governor and I have probably debated maybe two dozen times over the years. But I'd still enjoy nothing better than having a cup of coffee with [Lieutenant Governor] Leo McCarthy. Yeah. And he is that way himself. He debates the issue and never makes it personal, he never uses language that you couldn't use anywhere. So I've just made a practice. . . . and, as I say, it goes back to, I think, my raising. But if the issue isn't, as far as I'm concerned, the right thing, then I don't get involved in it. Because I don't know how to do anything that I don't believe in, and if I believe in it then I do everything that I can.

Reducing Crime in Del Paso Heights, California

MORRIS: How did you happen to decide to organize People's Advocate [Inc.]?

GANN: Well, I think crime was the beginning. Of course, I'd been involved as a citizen, just by working for a candidate or opposing a candidate or working, in fact, on an initiative-- not mine, but someone else's.

So we had crime, particularly in what we referred to loosely as the ghetto areas.

MORRIS: Is that herein the Sacramento area?

GANN: Yes. And I had some friends out in the Del Paso Heights area that were just some of the greatest Americans I've ever met. And they wanted very much . . . they felt like they were becoming a police city because of the police cars. You know, you drive down the street and there's a police car and three blocks farther down there's another.

And so, one day, we were discussing that and Cecil York, who's passed away now, he was a barber; and Cecil said, "You know, how do we get rid of the police cars? How

do we keep from becoming a police city?" And [?] Johnny Parsons said, "Well, if we could get rid of crime, then the police will go where the criminals are." You know. So between those gentlemen, they started what was called the Sacramento Parent Patrol. So it was one of the first patrols of that type, ever, in America, that I ever knew anything about at least. And they asked me if I would work with them and I said, "Sure, as much as I can." And I found myself putting in almost all of my time for a year helping them get organized.

MORRIS: Were you still in business then?

GANN: Yes, that's why I had to get out. Because in real estate, you just can't do that. I can't. There again, to go back to my raising, I was raised to believe that if I had a clientele, I was obligated mentally, physically, and spiritually to take care of the clientele. But in real estate to do that you need to be where they can reach you and I was always out fighting something.

MORRIS: Talking to neighborhood groups . . .

GANN: Yes, right. And so, we just decided that we would start, or they decided and I said, "I'll help you. You tell me what you want me to do." And they said, "Just help us get started and lead us and help us get an office and things." And do you know, we did get an office.

Cecil York owned a barber shop and a corner lot and the good guys that didn't like the idea of a parent patrol burned the barber shop. And so he gave the lot to the Parent Patrol and we had a nice building put up on it, and every nail in the building was donated, every hammer that hit the nail was donated, and so were the carpenters and the plumbers and the electricians and . . .

MORRIS: Really?

GANN: Oh, yes. It was just beautiful to see the people come to their rescue. And you know that they did reduce . . . unfortunately as I say, Cecil's dead, and one of the other gentlemen that started the Parent Patrol is gone, but you know, the crime went down to the point that the cost of your fire insurance dropped to the point to where you could insure your little home. So many things happened, proving

to me, once and for all, that. . . . J. Edgar Hoover was right when I heard him talk one time and he said that law enforcement can never be more effective than the neighborhood wants it to be effective. And we proved that point conclusively.

MORRIS: Was the police department interested in helping the parents do what they were trying to do?

GANN: Well, yes, except--let me tell you what those people did. That's a black neighborhood, except I was never raised to think of it as a black or white neighborhood. . . .

MORRIS: You come from Arkansas, don't you? There's a lot of both kinds there, aren't there?

GANN: Yes, and, of course, my dad used to say that you don't ask a man what church he belongs to, or a woman, or what political party they belong to, you ask them are they American. You know. But anyway, these people just simply done a job out there, and instead of using firearms, they used a camera.

MORRIS: They used a camera?

GANN: A camera. Polaroid camera. As an example, a group of kids built a big fire against a wall of the high school out there. They'd been made aware of that and they were there with cameras, but they didn't take the picture until the kids threw the gas on the wood they'd piled up there and dropped a match and then they'd take the picture. And this is what tickled them--and it did, because there was no damage, they got rid of the damage--many of the kids they recognized. Young people. And they'd [Knocks] knock on my door,

"Mr. Gann, you have a son named Richard?"

"Yes, I do."

"Can we talk to him please?"

"I'm sorry, he isn't here."

"Well, where is he?"

"Well, he and some of his friends are starting a little band and they're meeting in a garage, somebody's garage somewhere, practicing."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, pardon me, is this little Richard's picture here?"

[Laughter]

MORRIS: Oh, dear. So the parents became aware of what their children were doing.

GANN: Yes, what their children were really doing. It was obvious because you'd see a mother walk into a crowd that was trying to start some kind of a little uproar and grab herself an ear and they'd go home.

MORRIS: Really.

GANN: Oh, yes. And they were so magnificent. They did such a tremendous job. The thing that will discourage you, if you can be discouraged in the way that we worked, is the lack of willingness of the people to defend their own position. They do think freedom is free, and freedom isn't. And now somebody said it's because they're so discouraged. They call me many times and say to me, "Well, Mr. Gann, we have worked with you, my wife and I, for years, but we've just decided that we aren't going to do anything else, we aren't even going to vote any more. What difference does it make?"

And I just always use the same verbiage. I say, "Listen, don't tell me that, go down and tell some bureaucrat that, who might give you a big hug if you promise never to vote again."

MORRIS: You think the people who lived in Del Paso Heights were not ready to do something about the crime problem?

GANN: Oh, yes, they were. They did it without . . . they didn't even have to ask for help. The only help they asked for was what I asked for from private people, not from the police department or anyone else. And what they would do is that a man and wife or two men, always two people, patrol them together. You had, to begin with, you had two middle-aged--oh, not middle-aged but men in their early thirties or late twenties--in a car that had a two-way radio. And if they get any trouble, because they didn't carry firearms, if they got in trouble all they had to do was say, "Hey, we need a little help at . . ." and give the address.

MORRIS: They'd call back to the office.

GANN: Yes, they'd call back to the office.

MORRIS: Did you have some retired police people as advisors or any contact?

GANN: Well, most of the people out there, not most of them, but many of them are retired air force, or armed services some way. So they didn't need that advice.

MORRIS: They had some experience.

GANN: They had had some experience. So it just worked out beautiful, to the point where they never created a problem for themselves. And they were so congenial in their manner that it was pretty hard to get mad at them, you know, even if you're on the other side. And I think it proved a point, and within a year's time there must have been a hundred parent patrols in America that we would hear about.

MORRIS: Really, whereabouts would the other patrols be?

GANN: Oh, all over. In fact, some of the biggest ones, largest ones, that they came up with was in some of the eastern states. And so far as I know, Cecil York. . . . the first parent patrol that I ever knew anything about was, Cecil York was the chairman, in Del Paso Heights.

MORRIS: Yes. And did Cecil or you or Mr. Parsons go over to some of these other states and talk about what you were doing in Del Paso?

GANN: They talked. . . . no, but on radio and television, yes. I only stayed with them because I had promised to help them get a building up and raise a few dollars for them.

I held a musical celebration for them, lasted all day on Saturday. I had the three tall buildings in the state fairgrounds; I leased, rented for that day, and we had singers; people coming in from all over, including San Francisco, busloads. And we made it strictly a, should I say, people event. As I try to tell everybody, I do nothing for me and everything that I've ever accomplished has been because it was a "we" thing, not a "me" thing, and they worked the same way. And it turned out very well, but after they passed away, of course, for some reason it began to lose its. . . . However, it's still much nicer than it was.

MORRIS: Well, if the Parent Patrol made a difference in Del Paso Heights, maybe it wasn't needed anymore.

GANN: Well, that's true. It could be that. You know, at one time, of course, even the insurance on the houses was so very high, and it came down also. It came down.

MORRIS: Putting on a fund raiser at the state fairgrounds takes a lot of organizational skills. How did you learn how to do things like that?

GANN: Well, I've been involved with people all my life, you know, I don't know. Many people say I inherited it from my dad. I just don't know any different than what you do if you go out and are working with people.

I find that what the people hunger for in America today is somebody that will tell them the truth about what they're doing. Literally. And it frightens me a little bit that Americans have lost so much confidence in their political leadership, states, cities, counties, and federal. I don't know, I just. . . . if I can't tell them what I think. . . . and I assure them that I can make a mistake but if it's wrong, it's because I misunderstood it or couldn't figure out the truth of the situation. But I've never, in any way, tried to deceive the people that I work with, never. And I never will.

Lack of Confidence in Political Leadership; Initiative
Ballot Measures

MORRIS: Did you talk at all to the city council or whoever the local government is in Del Paso?

GANN: No.

MORRIS: They weren't interested in what. . . .

GANN: Well, I don't know whether they were or not. You see—I have many failures but one is that I have gone before the bureaucracy over the years and, should I say, was not successful. I've never been able to get. . . . as an example, my Victims' Bill of Rights:¹ I was criticized to high heaven for invading the legal area of California. But do you know that part of my Victims' Bill of Rights were bills that had been introduced as long as twelve years back in the California legislature, but didn't get out of

1. Proposition 8, Criminal Justice, initiative ballot measure approved by voters in June 1982.

committee. So I just got to the point where I said, "Hey, let's let the people make the judgment."

MORRIS: And then after the Del Paso Parent's Patrol got started, you moved on and started People's Advocate?

GANN: Yes, it became so time-consuming that I started People's Advocate and, of course, I've worked. . . . My friend, the speaker, said at a debate between he and I about . . .

MORRIS: [Assemblyman] Willie [L.] Brown [Jr.]?

GANN: Yes, two years or so ago, he said, "Well, I know this guy's had his nose in the state capitol for twenty years because that's how long I've been there." [Laughter] But it's true that--I believe so desperately--that the people who pay the bills are the ones that should have a right to make the judgments. And I'm told, "Well, then all you have to do is to defeat, at the next election, the people who are creating the problems for them." And I said, "Well, that's true, except for one thing: If you can put the word incumbent by your name you just picked up 20 percent of the vote in America going in."

MORRIS: Except that there's also the other theory in politics that the longer you stay in office, the more opposition you pick up. So actually, now, incumbency is supposed to become a negative factor.

GANN: But that doesn't prove true in the history today because you take--I go to Washington, D.C. occasionally and we have men that have been there for thirty years.

MORRIS: That's true.

GANN: You know, I try to get my point across without sounding too bitter or anything else, but I just say very simply that--when people brag to me about, "Well, we finally got to the point to where we're paying enough in congress, to where we're getting intelligent people"--I say, "Isn't that wonderful. And they have to be intelligent, otherwise they couldn't have increased the national debt in eight years more than it was increased the previous two hundred years when we fought every major war ever fought. A dummy could not have guts enough to do that." And so, to me, professional politicians are wrong. In fact, literally are

unconstitutional because it's supposed to be a citizen legislature. And we don't have a citizen legislature.

MORRIS: Was that true twenty years ago when you were starting People's Advocate?

GANN: Yes, it was. It was more so, not completely, no. But I'll tell what we did in 1952. We elected a congressman, and the largest donation--and remember, he wasn't an incumbent congressman--the largest donation that I can remember us receiving or him receiving was a twenty-five dollar check. But what we did was, we just asked everybody for a dollar, I mean if you spoke to us, you had the bum put on you. [Chuckles] And we sent that man to the Congress of the United States. But it seems now that where \$25,000 then would elect a congressman, today it takes \$250 or \$300 thousand.

MORRIS: Did you work with the Democratic party in some of the congressional and local campaigns?

GANN: Oh, yes. In the fifties, yes.

MORRIS: And did you decide that the Democratic party wasn't doing things the way you thought they should be doing?

GANN: No, as I knew the Democratic party, we were drifting away from the way. . . . I was a Jeffersonian Democrat, I guess you could call me. And we had gotten away from that. As an example, I don't understand the word liberal, because I was raised to believe that a liberal. . . . my dad said, "You people are awfully confused between a liberal and a conservative. A liberal is the one that puts somebody else's five-dollar bill in the collection plate, a conservative is the one who puts his own five-dollar bill in the collection plate."

I've seen people down here in our state capitol practically worshipping the legislators because they, years ago, they had given them (the crippled and the blind and the maimed) a five-dollar-a-month increase in their living allowance. And, oh, they just were thanking god for a liberal legislative body. And about six weeks later, they gave themselves a five-dollar-a-day increase in their daily per diem. [Chuckle]

So I said, "I was raised to believe that a liberal was someone that gave as much as they could of their own time and their own substance."

MORRIS: Gave liberally.

GANN: Gave liberally, yes. And so they tried to make a conservative out of me and they tried to make a . . . I had someone call me from Channel 5 about two months ago, I guess, and he asked me, he said, "Mr. Gann, you gone socialist on us?" And I said, "I don't think so, why?"

And he said, "Well, I just heard you say that you thought that there should be a blood test for everybody that wants a blood test whether they have money to pay for it or not." For AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.] And he said, "What you're saying is that the taxpayer should pay for that."

And I said, "Well, yes. but I'm still working for the taxpayer because, you see, for five dollars or so you can get that blood test. But to take care of the person after he gives somebody AIDS unknowingly, you just spend anywhere from \$75 thousand to \$200 thousand of the taxpayers' money. So I said, "I don't mean to imply that money and death go hand in hand, but those who might die of AIDS if it spreads enough, may be the fortunate ones, because . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

GANN: . . . If I'm not mistaken, he said it is costing us \$74 thousand and three or four hundred dollars a year to take care of them in prison now, when they have the ARC [AIDS Related Complex], but when that develops into AIDS, then they can get the medication to treat them that they can't get until such time as that happens, as I understand. But he says then you can just add \$50 thousand to \$70 thousand per year per patient. So you see, I think that it's in defense of the taxpayer.

We're fighting right now, of course, over Proposition 4.¹ And we're going to the people with a ballot--in fact it's out there now. We only have two-and-a-half months to obtain 600 thousand signatures, that is registered voters' signatures, which means we want to turn in a minimum of 750 thousand to be sure that the qualified number will be over 600 thousand. But we will be doing that to protect Proposition 4 and also to relinquish the six cents sales tax that you pay on gasoline.²

Now, most people don't realize that they have sales tax on gasoline. But it's six cents and it brings in from \$500 million to \$600 million dollars; it goes into the General Fund. Well, everybody thought that was a user's tax, a user fee. It should have been; in fact, in writing Proposition 4, we should have excluded that but we didn't. What we're doing with the petition we're circulating now is to prevent the need for a three or four billion-dollar bond issue to take care of the highways and the byways and the streets, you know.

And I said, "Let's go to the people with a bill that will use the money that we who use the freeways and the byways and the highways, we're already paying for them; why don't we take it out of the General Fund and put it into the highway department." So what we're doing is we're making that six-cent sales tax a user fee. Only four-and-three-quarter cents of that goes into the General Fund now, and that's what we'll be taking out of the General Fund. But the one-and-a-quarter cent goes to local government with transportation specified, [to be used] for transportation. So one-and-a-quarter cent of that goes to local government now, and we left that as it was.

1. Proposition 4, referred to as the "Spirit of 13," passed in November 1979, established constitutional limits on state government spending. This has come to be known as the "Gann limit."

2. This initiative did qualify. As Proposition 72, Emergency Reserve, Dedication of Certain Taxes to Transportation, it was defeated in June 1988.

MORRIS: Some of your propositions have had strong support from some of the assemblymen. Does this measure have some legislative support?

GANN: We don't know yet. We think it will now, we think it will have some support and we know it will have some opposition. Now, we hope it has some opposition, because with opposition you get press, and with the press you get your message out. The thing that made Proposition 13¹ and the Victim's Bill of Rights and some of those things so tremendously popular was that we were attacked in debates almost on a daily basis and, of course, the press picked it up and everybody. In fact, they knew about Proposition 13 all over Western Europe.

II. EARLY DAYS OF PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE, INC., 1974-1978

1960s Battles on Legislative Retirement Benefits

MORRIS: Now did you start People's Advocate before Prop. 13?

GANN: Oh, yes, in fact we were working as a committee, when I was working with the Parent Patrol and that was in 1968 to '69.

And so in 1974, an attorney friend of mine came to me and said, "Paul, you're becoming too well known and you're getting on too many people's toes; so if you're smart, you'll incorporate before somebody decides that they'll use the name themselves," you know. And . . .

MORRIS: Oh, that's interesting, you were speaking as a people's advocate.

GANN: Well, yes, I was speaking. We had no formal business arrangement and no corporation and so what we did, we incorporated in 1974. Well, I had just . . . I don't know if you remember this or not, and maybe you weren't even aware of it, so many people aren't because I really have never sought---as many people do---I've never hired anybody to

1. Property tax limitation initiative measure, co-authored by Gann and Howard Jarvis, approved by voters in June 1978.

get me publicity and that's the God's truth. But I was fighting the California legislature. In fact, they had passed a bill a few years before and I had tried to get it repealed, through a dozen different legislators, that would—I named it "instant retirement".

If you've been in the legislature for four years and your district was changed one iota, you could run to succeed yourself, if you wanted to, but if you were defeated, you could retire and draw a full pension. The only criteria was if you've served four years. I called that fraud—that's committing fraud against the people who pay the bill.

And so one of our people went to the governor of the state, the president at this time, but the governor of the state at that time [Ronald Reagan] and asked him to call a special session, and he said (and I knew that he was just as upset about the bill as anybody else) he said to the person that went to him to ask for the special session, he said, "Well, I called the leadership of both parties, and they tell me that I will be wasting \$500,000 of the taxpayers' money because there's no way that they can get enough votes to repeal that bill."

So a reporter came to me and he said, "Paul, you can't beat them in the courts." But he said, "Even if you did, remember this, the same people that donate ten-dollar checks to you are the ones that will pay their expenses, too, because the state will have to defend them when you sue them provided you intend to sue the entire body."

And so he said, "Let me tell you how you can beat them." He said, "Now that I've talked to you and seen that you really mean to do your best to drag them into court," he said, "Why don't you let me arrange to get you on KGO for two hours on a Friday night, from eight to ten, and you tell the people what you're going to do and why you're going to do it. And if the response is the way I think it will be there will never be a suit, because those people don't ever intend to let you get them in court. Even though they know they can beat you. So, I went on KGO . . .

MORRIS: Who's this reporter?

GANN: You know what, I've never met him before in my life and I've lost his card and I don't. . . . I've never seen him since. But he was just being kind because he felt like I was going to be hurt, you know. So he said, "If you will tell the story to those people out there, the way you've told it to me, and what your intentions are and what you think should happen, I'll guarantee you that you will never get the chance to take them to court." Well, I got home about one o'clock, on Friday night, after driving from San Francisco home.

MORRIS: Back to Sacramento.

GANN: So anyway, about one o'clock on Saturday, the phone rang in my little den there that I use as an office in my house, and the man said, "Mr. Gann, I'm one of those Third House people that you were talking about last night on KGO."

And I said, "Sir, if you want to fight, tell me what you want to use in the way of a weapon because I'm strung out and . . ." And he said, "No, no, no. I wanted to tell you . . ."

I said, "Did I say anything that wasn't true?" "No, you didn't." He said, "I enjoyed it, I listened to the whole two hours," but he said, "What I wanted to tell you was, knowing you would be strung out like an eight-day clock, I thought you could stand a chuckle."

And I said, "I could stand a chuckle, yes," and he said, "Well, I'm at the state capitol now and the Democrats are gathering in one end of the building and the Republicans are gathering in the other end and they're waiting for the governor to come down so they can ask him to call a special session."

MORRIS: Really?

GANN: Yes!

MORRIS: Oh, that's wonderful.

GANN: And they did call the special session and they did repeal it. They told me that they did it for me, but I'd never believe that. They did cut their pension in half, in two, and they put their arms around me and said, "We done that because you love to save the taxpayer money and we just knew that would make you happy." I said, "I think you're lying,

you done it in hopes you'd beat those bills." [Chuckle] But he signed the bill. I think he gets too much pension now from the State of California and so do hundreds of other people.

MORRIS: The former governors?

GANN: Yes, and former constitutional officers, former. . . . that's what I was fighting over, that instant retirement plan, so many people were getting pensions. As an example, never retiring and still working for the taxpayer--you know, go from one job to another and draw pensions that are out of this world. But, anyway, we didn't have to go to court, they came in and repealed it. However some of them were physically rough on me, wanted to be, bang my head against the third-floor wall a time or two. They said I'd cost them \$200,000.

I said, "No, I just kept you from stealing \$200,000." You see, my dad did me a terrible injustice because he raised me to believe that leadership was--as an example, a congressman is in a position of leadership, an assemblyman is, a state senator--and those people should set the example. My dad used to say to me, "Son, there goes Congressman Snortbottom. I want you to grow up and be just like him." You know, and I said, "My God, I wish I could tell my great grandson that." It's just been a. . . . there's no way that you can ever do the things you're called on to do.

Joining Forces with Howard Jarvis; Drafting Tax-Limit Measure [Proposition 13, 1978]

MORRIS: How did People's Advocate grow from the committee that you were working with here in Sacramento to become a statewide group?

GANN: Well, people just simply began to call me. We had been incorporated in 1974, but in '75 they'd begun to call me and say, "Mr. Gann, Paul, why don't you lead us in a property-tax fight." So, anyway, we talked about it for a year.

Finally I said, "All right. If you think we can do it, but remember this, [tax-limit advocate Howard] Jarvis has

been trying it for sixteen years." And they said, "Well, let's try it." Because some of the senior citizens who are on fixed income are having to sell their homes. So I said, "All right."

MORRIS: Who is they? Is this your group of directors?

GANN: Well, and many thousands. I get calls from, even today, I get calls from Australia and Canada, you know. But, I say "they" and that is People's Advocate because that's those people out there. Their names, I don't know, I'd have to know five hundred names.

MORRIS: Well, you know, who keeps track of the names?

GANN: Oh, we have our own—I'll show you in a little bit, we have the equipment in the back here. We keep track of the names. Yes. But anyway we decided, all right, we would take a shot at it. We'll see if we can do it. Well, I filed an initiative with the attorney general's office and would you believe that two or three days before my title and summaries came out, [executive director, Apartment Association of Los Angeles County] Howard Jarvis' title and summaries came out. So Howard and I were out there . . .

MORRIS: Both of you.

GANN: Both of us. With our own initiative, looking for seven or eight hundred thousand signatures. Well, we both failed.

After about a week, I caught a plane and flew--well, first I called Earl Christo, who was vice president of Jarvis' organization and I said, "Earl, I need to talk to Mr. Jarvis because we owe the people the right to vote on a bill for property-tax relief. And together we can make that a fact."

And Earl said, "All right, Paul, grab a plane, come on down and be my guest for a few days and I'll get you together with him one way or another." So after the fourth day, Mr. Jarvis called his board together and we did get together and we came out then in '77 to qualify for what turned out to be Proposition 13 in 1978.

MORRIS: Was it a tough job for the two of you to decide to work together?

GANN: No, in fact it wasn't tough on me, simply because I was there for one reason and that was because by this time, I'm

getting calls at home as late as midnight, from people who are crying because they don't have enough money to pay their property tax, and "My wife died" and "My husband died four years ago" and you know . . .

MORRIS: Is this because you were out on the radio or the newspapers?

GANN: Yeah, we had a lot of newspaper publicity and also radio and some television. But basically, it was because the people were being hurt to the point that they couldn't live in their homes. And not only that but, to me, the lack of leadership at a time when we had eight billion dollars in surplus funds. They were still going all the way out, getting every dime they could get.

So I said, "Well, since we are the government, if we are willing to accept that, then the people in leadership may think that we like it." Really, when you think about it.

I had a man call me down to his office one time and he said, "Mr. Gann, I came here six years ago with the same feeling and the same zeal that you have today." And he said, "You know, it didn't dawn on me that I wasn't representing my people until one day I was called on to rush down to the assembly floor because they were going to vote on a multi-million-dollar bill; they didn't think they'd have any problem but they didn't want to take the chance, so 'Get down and be ready to vote yes.'" And he said, "You know, I came back up and you were on the radio." And he said, "Something you said hit me right between the eyes. I told myself, 'Hey, this man isn't running around knocking us, he's just telling the truth.'" He said, "Do you know, I went down and voted on that multi-million dollar bill without even asking anybody what the money was going to."

So they criticized the petition. They'd say that we don't put enough time into it and enough thought into it yet. [Picks up highway appropriations petition] This is a petition that we were eight months writing. The Victims' Bill of Rights. I sat there for four months, sometimes fourteen hours a day because many attorneys volunteered to come by and help us with the legal aspects. And I had to be there, because some of them could come one hour and some of

them could come at another hour. But we went to the people with the twenty-first draft. Twenty-first draft.

MORRIS: For Prop. 13?

GANN: No, the Victim's Bill of Rights. Well, Prop. 13 had been written over and over again except that. . . the only thing that Howard and I had any trouble with at all on 13, the issue itself, was that some of his people wanted (not Howard but some of his board of directors) wanted the appraiser to be able to increase the tax on your property 5 percent a year.

And I said, "Good lord, I can't go for that, because you see in five years, we'd be where we're at today and 5 percent over." And I said, "I can't do that, I would go for the 2 percent." And Howard agreed with me to the point that it made some of his people very angry.

But we did. . . but what we did was, of course, we had people writing in, volunteering, calling, phoning day and night. Volunteering to circulate petitions, do anything they can do. "What can I do?" You know.

MORRIS: Whereabouts in the state do you recall you had the best support?

GANN: Well, as an example, I had an office at that time in southern California, in Van Nuys, as well as here in Sacramento. And between our office and a local taxpayers' group down there, and Jarvis's people, we turned in, I think it was seven hundred thousand signatures in Los Angeles County alone.

MORRIS: Wow.

GANN: Orange County, we turned in two or three hundred thousand. But we just. . . it was amazing how rapidly it went.

Two Property-Tax Reform Measures on the 1978 Ballot

GANN: But one of the reasons then, the thing that helped us was that the bureaucracy itself attacked us viciously and then they came out with Proposition 8 themselves and put it on the ballot, a property-tax issue. And so we had to fight 8 as well as fight for 13. And, of course, the thing that made Proposition 13 so big was the way that we were

attacked. You know, our lives were threatened; in fact, Howard's family and my wife as well as myself.

MORRIS: Really?

GANN: Yeah.

MORRIS: Oh, dear. Well, it's really odd, because if I remember correctly, the legislature was also working on property-tax reform.

GANN: They'd been working for five years on property tax. They used to tell me every time they'd leave town that it was on the front burner next year. And so, you see, the burner had burnt out. To me, I feel the same way about AIDS.

I will not sit by and see AIDS become another cancer-research foundation. Because we have been investigating cancer for a hundred years and we've spent a trillion dollars. And I have a friend that dies every month somewhere with cancer. So, you see, you can't let AIDS go that way because AIDS kills. There's no cure, no operation. Now they're saying that it's grown from 66 percent [of AIDS patients die] up to 90 percent, and so I don't think you can wait on the system to perform. It's like one of the homosexual leaders in San Francisco said to the president's board that he's just appointed, he said: "We can't take the time that you've taken with some other very dangerous diseases because this isn't dangerous, this is fatal."

And so [getting back to Proposition 13] I think there comes a time when common sense has to overcome a lack of intelligence, really. Because you see, as an example, let me tell you what's happened. Many of these happen and many of them we never hear about, but I have people in so many places throughout the state of California, and I get a call from a person down in the farm area in the Valley and they say, "Paul, you know what just happened? One of our people, one of our workers in our department of education, not a teacher, has just gone to the superintendent and said, 'Hey I want to retire and I've been here twenty years,' or whatever and, 'I built up a couple of hundred dollars worth of overtime.' And the super said, 'Well, I can't, I haven't made provisions to pay you for overtime but what we could do

is call it sick leave.'" She was so angry, she was so bitter because that could happen.

And in our northern California, we have had a case where the board (and I don't know why we have boards, but anyway) the board had hired a superintendent a year before on a three-year contract. They didn't like his personality, so they fired him after the first year. So all the taxpayers have to do with him is give him a couple of hundred and fifty thousand dollars while they hire somebody else to finish out his term. Well, you see, to me that's being very careless. There's one case; yes, I could--but it isn't one case. They're careless with the taxpayers' money, that's a fact.

GANN: My Proposition 4 has proven one thing conclusively, that we can get along without fire departments, police departments, and education. You know, of course, all the school houses closed up and all the fire departments and all the police departments. And yet, they were going to spend this billion, one million dollars, they were going to take that away from the people and spend even more of the surplus money that they didn't know that they would ever receive, when they wrote the budget.

MORRIS: Could we go back a minute? Did they close the police and fire departments?

GANN: No, of course not, that was their argument.

MORRIS: Right, I just wanted to verify that.

GANN: Now, as an example, in Oakland where I challenged the city attorney--[a reporter for] Channel 2 had called me at a dinner I was speaking at and said that she just came through Oakland and they found three fire departments with big signs placed there by the city. "If you vote yes on 13 (this was in the old 13 days) this fire department will be closed." Then she said, "Then I just had to look around and," she said, "They had the same thing on the big library." So she said, "Will you meet me at the library?"

And I said, "Well, I will if you can get the mayor or the city attorney there. "

And she said, "I'll do that. I don't know who, but I'll have somebody from the city." Well, they rushed me

into Oakland, and the city attorney was there. And here's the sign, right in the plate glass window as you open the door, "Vote no on 13: if you don't, this building will be closed."

And I said, "Well, sir, I want you to let me put the same size ad on this window on this side on this building saying, 'That's the biggest lie ever told.'"

Well, he said, "No, we can't do that because this is city property and it's against the law to allow an individual to do that."

And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, sir. I'm gonna sue your tail off and this city's if you don't close this building after we've won." Well, I was angry then. I didn't mean it. I don't sue, this, that. Anyway, I just had to get the point across that it wasn't necessary for him to close that building, because we were paying hundreds of millions of dollars every year, more than the government could spend. Otherwise, we wouldn't have a billion-dollar surplus.

So it was just so incredible that . . . we made a fight out of it and they accomodated us and got us the press. Channel 4 in San Francisco arranged to carry us statewide on a debate the night before the election. And it was between Senator Peter Behr and our present lieutenant governor [Leo McCarthy] and myself and Mr. Jarvis. It was hilarious because they were cautioning me about saying we had five billion plus in surplus funds. Well, I had somebody in that department that was telling my wife or I, once, twice a month how much they had.

And I said to Leo, "I'd be happier if I wouldn't be getting somebody fired, but I'd be happy to tell you who you can talk to and find out the truth. But the governor's [Edmund G. Brown, Jr.] pulling your leg." I said, "You're going to wind up taking the brunt for this phony two billion five hundred million dollars that we have."

Well, he called me and said, "Hey, we're going to meet jointly tomorrow. The governor's called for a joint session. I want you to come down. " And I went down. And the governor spent four billion dollars in twelve and a half

minutes and the state isn't allowed to borrow money and we only had two and a half billion dollars.

I said, "Now, that's a miracle." So I offered to let the mayor of New York City have the governor for thirty days for a million dollars in unmarked bills because, I said, "You know, this man just does miracles." And I said, "He can take care of your. . . ." Remember New York was in such bad trouble?

MORRIS: They were in very bad shape then.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Session 2, October 19, 1987]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

III. LATER CRUSADES

Concern in 1987 for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome [AIDS]

- GANN: I can't understand why we don't feel like we're invading somebody's civil rights if they go out here and shoot somebody and we arrest them and put them away, but I'm invading people's civil rights when I speak out about AIDS, and they've known me as a man who's worked for civil rights for years and I still work for civil rights.
- MORRIS: Who's "they" you are talking about?
- GANN: Well, I know people who are out to . . . By the way, have you read the book—I had a call this morning about it.
- MORRIS: Randy Shilts at the San Francisco Chronicle.
- GANN: Randy Shilts And The Band Plays On or something like that.¹
- MORRIS: There's a good article about it in the current Time magazine if you'd like to get a quick update.
- GANN: I would. I would. I'm sure we take Time. Anyway, somehow he found out how AIDS came to San Francisco, is that the way you read it?
- MORRIS: I think he's been covering the AIDS subject for several years and been doing a lot of reading and I think he's tracked back through public health records and made contact with . . .

1. And the Band Played On, Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1987.

GANN: I got a call from a doctor in Los Angeles this morning before I came to the office and he says that I should get the book. He says it's well written and the man has researched the subject very carefully. So I will get the book.

Even though we pretend that we don't know how it came to the United States but you may remember--someone called me just recently and told me that a few years ago we didn't admit homosexuals in America. Then we had one come into San Francisco, from Great Britain or somewhere and we were going to deport him and, quote, "the gay community" got together and went to court and the judge ruled that it was unconstitutional and he could stay, so. But that wasn't far enough back for him to have had it in his book, I don't think. I'm trying to get a record on that because I don't feel like anybody has a right to spread a contagious disease.

MORRIS: Well, you've got precedent on that. When I was a small child, if you had chicken pox, they used to quarantine your house.

GANN: My doctor said, "Well, if you have one of fifty-eight contagious diseases, I would have to quarantine you and Nell [Mrs. Gann] in your home, even if your grandkids, your kids had been there." And I said, "I don't understand that." He said, "It's very simple. The reason we have to report venereal disease is that they're considered contagious. They are curable." But he said, "You have AIDS, and that's going to kill you eventually and I can't report that." And he said, "That's incredible to me. That's not only stupid, it's asinine."

MORRIS: Well, you've got a remarkable record of dealing with serious illness in your youth. I wanted to ask you a little bit about that. The articles I read, said . . .
[Interruption]

Court Tests of Prop. 13

GANN: I've known [State Senator, former San Francisco Supervisor] Quentin [Kopp] since '77 or '78. '77 in particular, Quentin

was the first person that went to bat for me on Proposition 13.

MORRIS: Really? Did you meet him at one of the public gatherings about Prop. 13?

GANN: Yes, and he asked me to come down to San Francisco because the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to increase taxes within a matter of hours after Proposition 13 won. And he called and he said, "Hey, I wanna handle this case for you at no cost." And I said, "Well, wonderful, what can I do?" And he said, "Well, come down and see if we can get some people to join forces with us." So we got the board of realtors to join forces and who else, we had another organization there.

MORRIS: One of the businessmen's organizations?

GANN: Yes. Chamber of commerce. Chamber of commerce, yes. And right away, it was influential enough to where the supervisors repealed it.

MORRIS: Really. In other words, did People's Advocate bring suit against the . . .

GANN: No, we were bringing suit as a committee, but we didn't have to go through with it. We didn't even have to go to court, because all we wanted was to stop that increase. So the first, I guess the first actual court case that we had was with Alameda County across the bay. And we won that one in court.

MORRIS: What was the specific of that?

GANN: They had increased taxes and . . .

MORRIS: After Prop. 13?

GANN: Yes, and they had to give back several hundred thousand dollars to the taxpayer. But it was fascinating those days. It should have proven to the people that really we are the government if we want to get together. Not individually we can't, but as a unit. Because almost the entire bureaucracy was--bitterly.

MORRIS: In something like the case in Alameda County, did People's Advocate have a local committee that alerted the state office?

GANN: What we did there, some local attorney filed a suit, called us, our attorneys who represent us, and then we joined

forces with him. Now I just had to chuckle because I was a witness but the judge would not let me answer any questions. He said, "No, no. Mr. Gann is too closely affiliated with it." And so . . . but our man did win.

MORRIS: You were a witness for the people bringing the case against the county.

GANN: Yes, for Proposition 13. As the coauthor, I would know about as much about it as the judge did but I wasn't allowed to say anything.

MORRIS: Was that your experience in other cases?

GANN: Well, we had some of the cases that the judge said, "Hey, if you can't tell me, who could?" You know.

MORRIS: Before it got into the courtroom?

GANN: Yes, and so we found that really that we were treated pretty good.

IV. QUALIFYING INITIATIVE BALLOT MEASURES

Challenge to Victims' Bill of Rights [Prop.8, 1982]; Verifying and Filing Petitions

GANN: Now, of course the California Trial Lawyers Association tried to keep me off the ballot with Proposition 8, the Victims' Bill of Rights, to the point where they took me into court. They sued me to keep me off the ballot.

MORRIS: I see. On what grounds?

GANN: On the grounds that I hadn't gotten enough signatures to get on that quickly. You know. So the secretary of state [March Fong Eu] sent her attorney over to testify on my behalf, and after the sworn testimony of the attorney from the secretary of state's office that when Mr. Gann turns in a petition it's been gone over already and if he turns in that number we know it is qualified, the judge said if the secretary of state feels that way, the court feels that way. So.

MORRIS: Was that Mrs. Eu herself that came to . . .

GANN: No, her attorney, she sent her attorney. Who handled that end of it anyway and made a tremendous witness. Without

March Fong Eu, of course, we would more than likely have lost that battle.

MORRIS: Really. Did you have a chance to talk with her?

GANN: Oh, I've talked with her a lot of times, yes. In fact, to be honest with you, she has done a tremendous job as secretary of state. She has lived within Proposition 13 and she hasn't shirked anything; in fact, she's added to the responsibility of the secretary of state office and still lived within Proposition 13. It was apparent when she had the idea that any bureaucracy could live with Proposition 13, if they wanted to run the show the way that you would if you were in private enterprise--buy a dollar's worth for a dollar.

MORRIS: How did she come around to that point of view, do you know?

GANN: Simply because we have turned in many petitions and we go over ours, we never go directly to the counties. Every county in the state, the petition goes through my back room. Christina [] is a highly experienced person, she's in charge of that department. And we have a half-a-dozen volunteers that always join her and we go over every petition. And we segregate them, because we claim to be the taxpayer's friend so why not show it by doing the job that, if we don't do it then the counties have to bring in short-term help.

MORRIS: Right, to check all those signatures.

GANN: To check those things. So what we do is that everything that is legal to do, we do. We go over those--as an example, when we file a petition, we can get a receipt within a couple of hours after we file them. Whereas they're segregated into ones, you get primarily--you'll get one signature on a petition and then you'll get ten or eight or nine or seven or four or three or two.

MORRIS: Signatures on each petition?

GANN: Yes, and so when we go in and we put a stack of petitions here, they'll be ones, twos, threes. So all they have to do is count them. The pieces of paper . . .

MORRIS: I see, okay, so this pile is all ones [petitions with one signature] and you just run that through.

- GANN: And then, we mark out many signatures, we just cancel them out, because of errors made.
- MORRIS: Like the address . . .
- GANN: The address or---well, if it's an address we can find we're allowed to put that in. But so many people print their name but don't sign it. Of course, we can't have that out, we go through every one. So it's very simple for them in doing the random count to go through them, and they've never found that many bad ones on ours. That was a reason that she could take that position.
- MORRIS: Oh, that's interesting. Do you have copies of all the different county voter-registration lists here in the office to work from?
- GANN: We probably don't today but we will have, of course, because you never know who's in charge in each county; but before we send them in, of course, we know.
- MORRIS: Well, say in '78 and '79, did you obtain copies of all the current voter-registration lists?
- GANN: Oh, yes, and then, of course, what we do there is, we don't deliver them to each county, we have a chairman of each county and we send them from here to that person. That person doesn't go over them, that person just files them. We've already gone over them here.
- MORRIS: I see. If I got a petition in the mail and I got three signatures on it, I would send it back here to the Sacramento headquarters rather than my county chairman?
- GANN: Oh, yes, because you see, those people are volunteers, many of them work for a living, most of them in fact. So here we have volunteers who will come in and help us and we can go through them here and when we send them to you as our county chairman in that county, then you take them down on the filing date.

And the reason we do that--and we usually don't get them to you until the day before the filing date because I've had courtesies extended me by counties that have called me up and said, "Mr. Gann, somebody just brought a handful of petitions in to file, and you know what happens if I file them: that shuts this county out from now on in." And I said, "Thank heavens."

MORRIS: Do you only do one filing?
GANN: One filing. And so we are very careful not to file ahead of time. If you do, you could lose the rest of that time. In that county.
MORRIS: That's an interesting detail.
GANN: Yes, it is.
MORRIS: So some of the people in the local county clerk's offices have become well acquainted with your people and . . .
GANN: Oh, yes, yes, yes. And, of course, they always spot check them, you know. And if you have x number of signatures beyond what they found, then they qualify you; and, of course, that was the testimony in court.

But I could never understand why, of all people, the defense lawyers' association would fight me so hard trying to keep me from getting the signatures. In fact, I had a little fun out of some of them in Oakland--now, I don't think I would have accepted the invitation had I known that it was going to be defense attorneys and particularly those paid by the taxpayers . . .

MORRIS: From the district attorney's office?
GANN: No, from the defense.
MORRIS: From the public defender's office?
GANN: The public defender's office.
MORRIS: Really?
GANN: And, of course, we had some judges and we had some other attorneys. But, I walked off of the platform and here are three attorneys that had Mrs. Gann cornered, and [one of them] said, "Mrs. Gann, this is a monetary consideration for us, of course," but he said, "If Mr. Gann wins, we'll make more money than we've ever made."

And I arrived there in time to overhear that and I said, "Hey," I said, "Don't kid Mrs. Gann." I said, "If it's a monetary situation with you and you thought my initiative would help you make money then you'd be out circulating my petition instead of being in here fighting me, so let's don't kid each other."

And he was telling Mel [], he said, "The reason we get our clients off is, it's not a weak system, it's just that we're the best defense lawyers in the country." I

said, "Sir, you've no idea whether you're a defense lawyer or not, you've never had to defend a client on charges of guilty or innocent." Technicalities.

MORRIS: Hmm. I don't quite follow that: people who use a public defender don't go to trial?

GANN: Oh, yes, they go to trial but then the cases--and that's the reason we went with the Victims' Bill of Rights--it turned out to be Proposition 8--it was simply because nobody seemed to be trying the hood, or the criminal, that was being charged.

MORRIS: Alleged criminal.

GANN: Alleged. Yes. Was never tried as to whether he was guilty or innocent or not; it's, "Did the policeman treat him nice or did the policeman fail to read him his rights," and all of those things. And I said, "Hey, all we want you to do is to try the person on guilty or innocent." Like the [State Supreme Court Chief Justice] Rose Bird case: when I was asked about how I felt about when they gave this guy a new trial and wanted him sentenced to life in prison instead of sent to the death chamber, why I said, quote, "Hey, the judge did not tell the jury that they had to prove that the man had intended to kill his victims in his home."¹ And they said, "What do you think about that, Mr. Gann?" And I said, "Well, I could have gone along with that if the guy had only stabbed him twenty-two times with an eight-inch blade, but when he stabbed him that twenty-third one, I had an idea he was trying to kill him." You know.

Personal Security; Supporters; Finances

MORRIS: Oh, I see. Has Mrs. Gann usually gone along with you on your speaking and traveling?

GANN: Many times, she does, yes. They don't like for me to travel alone because people have called up many times and told me how that they intended to see that I got a nice burial.

1. Reference is to decisions of the California Supreme Court while Bird was chief justice.

MORRIS: You've had threats along the way.

GANN: Oh, yes, in fact, on Proposition 13, we were personally threatened many times but so were some of the members of our family. Mrs. Jarvis was threatened, so was Mrs. Gann. In fact, they wrote Mrs. Gann a letter. Told her how they were going to get her.

MORRIS: Oh that's terrible, that's terrible.

GANN: Right, and so that. . . . my wife and I, we talked it over. . . . And I kind of resent people who call me today and they say, "Well, Mr. Gann, privately I agree with you 100 percent but I can't do it publicly." And I just say very simply, "I'm sure happy that two hundred years ago, our founding fathers had courage enough to do it publicly. If they'd done it privately, we'd still be under a kingship."

MORRIS: Did you add some security people to the People's Advocate?

GANN: No, we. . . . of course, my staff is always looking out for me--they used to try to keep me from going anywhere. But I said, "Look, they can assassinate the president of the United States, they sure wouldn't have any trouble getting me. So why should I have a person to trail along with me that they'd have to kill before they killed me." If they want to assassinate you, they can get you. Look what they did to the president, right?

By the way, I was on a plane between Chicago (I change in Chicago) and D.C. and the pilot told us that he [Reagan] had been shot and they didn't know for sure how he was at that time [1981]. So when I caught my cab in Washington for my hotel, I said to my driver, I said, "If it isn't too far out of the way, I would like to drive past the hospital where the president is." He said, "Mr. Gann, sure." He said, "It's just a block and a half, two blocks from the hotel I'm taking you to." And he drove me right by it. And, you know, it was just misty and nasty, and there was literally hundreds of people across the street from the hospital standing there looking right straight into that hospital. I said, "Isn't it wonderful that we still care really. We pretend we don't, but most of us do."

MORRIS: Yes, I think you're right, I think you're right. In addition to having county chairmen, are there regional . . .

GANN: No. Now many taxpayers' associations worked with us, county taxpayers' associations.

MORRIS: No California Taxpayers Association?

GANN: Not the California, no. County taxpayers. California Taxpayers Association worked against us.

MORRIS: Now, why would that be?

GANN: Because they represent business, corporate structure, the banks, all that company there, you know, that type. No, in fact, in the beginning, they started out to debate me, but they only debated me a couple of times. And they didn't go over very well with the audience. [Chuckle]

MORRIS: Oh, my.

GANN: But your county taxpayers associations, most of them give us support; many of them do that. Because we've always been, we, should I say, the people out there--the bureaucracy creates the bill but we pay it. So I go to those people who pay the bill. I have very little corporate help in anything I've ever done. One man said a developer [told him] that Gann saved him five million dollars, and he said, "How much have you given Gann to help do his mailing and his traveling and keep the place going?" He said, "I've never even given him a postage stamp, he doesn't need it."

But they make fun of me, this profession, many of them do, kidding me, because we. . . as an example, in one of our campaigns, we had sixty-thousand contributors and they ran an average of about fourteen dollars each. From a dollar to twenty-five dollars. Once in a while, you hear somebody come out from the back room say, "Ho, Ho, Hey! I'm the champion today, I've a hundred-dollar check here." But there's two reasons for that. One is that, many people aren't aware of it, but the great majority of federal taxpayers . . .

[Interruption]

Oh sure, we couldn't have made Proposition 13 without them.

But, you see, the people that were fighting us on Proposition 13 were the people that were saying that we [the state] had two-and-a-half billion dollars in reserve funds. But I knew we had closer to eight. And I, in fact, they corrected me for saying that we had five billion plus. They

said, "You're going to embarrass us all because they're going to find out after the election that you were mistaken and they aren't going to think you were mistaken, they're going to think you were lying to them." And I said, "No, because, you see, I'm not a politician. You people have to be careful about that."

MORRIS: Did People's Advocate have a committee that studied the budget and the revenue figures?

GANN: Oh, yes. And then we have people who are professional at that but make contributions to us in that manner can't afford to be identified. In fact, I would have known within a matter of sixty or seventy-five million dollars what the reserve was every month. If I'd have used the person's name . . . [Laughter]

MORRIS: Is it reasonable to assume that that might be somebody in the Department of Finance?

GANN: Oh, I don't know how else they would have known. And they would talk to only two people, Mrs. Gann or myself. I don't know where Howard was getting his information. I don't know whether he was getting it at that point or not.

Working with Jarvis; Press Coverage; Voting Patterns

MORRIS: How did you and Mr. Jarvis divide up the chores in that Prop. 13 campaign?

GANN: Well, we didn't. We just each went our own way unless some politician wanted--two politicians wanted a debate.

MORRIS: I see.

GANN: Then, of course, we worked together and it was always nice to debate with Howard on my side of the desk.

MORRIS: Because he was a forceful speaker?

GANN: Not only forceful, but he could attract. . . . in fact, I think the San Francisco paper did the best job of anybody as far as press is concerned. They ran pictures of Howard and I, a little larger picture of Howard than of me. And underneath it said, under Howard's, it said, "The man with the brass band" Under mine it said, "The man that comes along and tunes up your roses." But Howard was very attractive to the press. He wanted to be attractive to the

press. And I said to the press, "If I have to swing by my tail from a chandelier to get you to tell the people what I'm doing, then you'll never tell them because I don't intend to do that."

MORRIS: That sounds like you maybe had better press coverage in southern California than northern California.

GANN: Well, he had tremendous coverage wherever he went. I think San Francisco's the only place that neither one of us ever got good coverage. Now, we had both been on radio and television many times in the area, but, as an example, if I was going to hold a press conference in San Francisco, I would never know whether I would have two reporters or maybe three or . . .

MORRIS: Why?

GANN: Well, I don't know. I never figured it out. Except for one thing, and that is that they didn't like us, like me. I mean, basically, as a group. We have only carried San Francisco city and county on one or two of those.

MORRIS: What counties have been the strongest in support of you?

GANN: Of course, we have several. We have Orange County and we have, the--Butte County is always great, and some of the foothill counties are all good. You know, the foothill counties are all good. We did very well in Los Angeles; between my office and Jarvis' office on Prop 13, we turned in, I think, about 700,000 signatures in Los Angeles County alone. On Proposition 13. In the city and county.

MORRIS: Yes, has it usually worked out that the votes kind of match the number of signatures on the initial petition on the ballot?

GANN: Well, not that. We had 1,263,000 signatures, first time that anybody exceeded a million, but then we got many, many more votes than that, of course. But one of the reasons that I was particular about the way I do it is that I want the people out there to understand one thing, that the elected official or appointed official is not the government, they represent the government, they and I: we are. My almost a slogan has been, I say to the people of the United States, not only in California but--"Hey, if we go out and fight something that's good for us, not me, we,

for us, then you can make a mountain." And I've proven that.

MORRIS: And once you've collected all these signatures, and turned in the petitions, did People's Advocate then send information about the campaign back to those people who signed the petition?

GANN: No, simply because we don't have that kind of money and that kind of a staff. Once the initiative has qualified, then volunteers drop out to where you have your staff and And that's all you can ask them to do.

MORRIS: They don't stay together and help pass the measure?

GANN: Well, many of them do, yes, and that's the reason you win. And another thing that helps us at the polls, of course we have failed a yes vote on one of our initiatives, but we didn't fail to qualify: I mean, it was on the ballot, very heavily on the ballot. But one of the things that I think is good is, the more people that you've got--and that's the reason that I don't ever try to get big sums of money from anybody is because . . .

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Contributions, Collecting Signatures; Advice-Seekers

GANN: [But when someone sends in money along with the petition,] that means that that person was interested enough to help, you know. And then there comes a time when you need people to go to the poll and vote. 'Cause I haven't won anything by qualifying.

MORRIS: That's true, that's only halfway there.

GANN: Right, halfway there.

MORRIS: About how many of the petitions come in with a contribution?

GANN: Well, it depends on how you write the letter. Now right now, we aren't asking for a contribution, we are asking for signatures because we only have two-and-a-half months to do a five-months job. And so we'll be fighting very hard,

what do we have left? Ted [Costa],¹ what do we have--six weeks left?

COSTA: About six, seven weeks.

GANN: For our petition? About six, seven weeks. So you see, we have to have about 40,000 signatures a week.

MORRIS: That's a lot.

GANN: Yes, it is. See, to really be sure that we have qualified, we can't turn in 600,000 signatures, we have to turn in 750[000] to 900,000. Now if you turn in 900,000, you can relax and go home and say, "We have won," before you even hear from the secretary of state or the counties. So that's what we try to do. And that's the reason we fight for the million.

MORRIS: So it's a separate mailing process to raise the money?

GANN: We have at times written a little note in with the petition. We need some help financially because, as an example, it costs to mail it out with an envelope inside addressed to us and stamped, it would cost about thirty cents. And then when it comes back . . .

MORRIS: That includes printing up the petition?

GANN: Yes, and then when it comes back, though, it costs us thirty cents to get it out of the post office. They're postage paid. So you see, it costs us--you can buy a signature by hiring people to circulate it as cheaply as you can mail them if they only send in one signature. Because you can buy them for fifty cents, that is I say, buy them, you can hire people to go out for fifty cents a signature. And it costs about fifty to sixty cents to send out that letter.

MORRIS: Have any of the local units used college students or . . .

GANN: Oh, yes, many of them do, in fact, I understand that when the people had the petition out to stop smoking, somebody said that the tobacco companies put up enough money to where those people could get paid more than fifty cents. They paid whatever they had to pay to qualify. Because the people doing it, I suppose they're unknown to the people out

1. Costa, Gann's assistant, replied from the adjacent office where he was working.

there so it's a matter of. . .you couldn't say that this is a People's Advocate, Paul Gann petition. And so. . .

MORRIS: My question was, if some of the People's Advocate county groups may have paid for people to collect signatures for them. Do you think?

GANN: Well, not that I know of, and I think I would have known. But we bought some signatures on Proposition 61 about 100,000 of them, if I remember right.¹ Simply because we'd fought so hard on it but, fortunately or unfortunately, we didn't have to have them. But we didn't know that at the time, you know.

So, you see, one of the things that hurts petitions is that people, they read about somebody being successful, and so I've had them come in here, "Mr. Gann, will you tell me how I go about this?" I say, "Well, you have to sit down and you work out the legal issue. And you take a \$200 certified check and that instrument to the attorney general of the state of California. Which office then within forty-five to fifty days will send you back what we refer to as a title and summary that comes from the secretary of state. After that, all you have to do is go with that and order 500,000 petitions." And then you say, "And by the way, what size organization do you have?"

"Well, I don't have an organization but I have an idea whose time has come. All I have to do is have the petition." And I always tell them the same thing. "If this works for you, will you let me know?" Because they fail so many times; in fact, more people fail than succeed in qualifying. And that discourages the people that give of their time and efforts and dollars and their five dollars. And so, they don't really consider the matter deep enough, I don't think. So the reason that I'm going now (and many people and even my family sometimes give me a hard time) but people have worked so closely with me over the years that I

1. Prop. 61, November 1986, an initiative to overhaul compensation for elected and appointed officials and laws dealing with public contracting, was defeated.

feel as obligated to them as I would feel for a corporation if I was working for it.

MORRIS: People tend to stay on as supporters of People's Advocate once they have given time and . . .

GANN: Well, yes. However, you never know for sure. Of course, you have a bulk of them that do stay with you; if they didn't, you wouldn't win. But on the other hand, all of them don't. As an example, some people like it and others . . . it depends on the issue. But we do have people that stay with us simply because their basic belief is on a par with ours. So they're with us in all of our . . . It's a year's job to qualify and get a yes vote. If you do it in a year, you're very fortunate.

MORRIS: That seems like a tight schedule. Have you ever done a study to kind of get an idea about who those supporters are out there? Do they tend to be one kind of age or another?

GANN: No. We go from a first-time voter to the oldest in the state.

MORRIS: Really? More men than women?

GANN: Well, no, I think it's the other way around, maybe. I think the women are . . . I often kid the men in political campaigns, I say we're wonderful when we're at the head table, and particularly when we're on television but basically the women are more faithful to the government, they phone or ask you to sign a petition. As an example, my wife goes after from one to three hundred signatures consistently on a campaign, and, of course, they know her at the supermarkets. If she doesn't have a table, they find one for her and bring it out. And people know it's her too, that helps.

MORRIS: Well, in the Sacramento area . . .

GANN: Well, all over the place. Of course, we don't work Sacramento, we're out of Sacramento 99 percent more than we're in Sacramento. We work a lot in southern California because that's where the people are, in San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles. In fact, I just did a radio program on a talk show in Ventura that I've been going to, I guess, for many years, fifteen years, I guess.

MORRIS: They call you up and say, "I hear you got a new petition, come and talk about it?"

GANN: Yes, and we have been at it so long now that people recognize the name and they know what we've accomplished over the years.

We don't have enough. . . . Americans let down for years in living up to their constitutional responsibility and that is: if you have a bad government then it's the responsibility of the government, because they are the government, and--what did our forefathers say, "If the train of government gets off the track, it's the people's responsibility to put it back on."

V. STATE SPENDING LIMIT: PROPOSITION 4, 1979

County Budget Problems; Further Effects of Prop. 13

MORRIS: When I was looking at some of the materials that you gave to the State Library, there was a reference to some work that the Dolphin Group did for you on Prop. 13?

GANN: No, on Prop. 4.

MORRIS: On Prop. 4, okay.

GANN: Yes, they worked for us for a while, yes. And we work with them, of course, we work with anybody that works with us.

MORRIS: Now, were they doing direct mail?

GANN: Yes, they were doing some direct mail. That's when we really had some very excellent ideas from somebody on trying something and we tried it with Prop. 4. Unfortunately we weren't as prepared--didn't have time to prepare--but somebody said, it was on the plane, and somebody said, "Why don't we try to get volunteers to work the polling places?" By law, you can do it, you have to be a hundred feet away from the polling place. And so I said, "We're going to try it, except I'm going to ask our people to be brave about it and be a hundred and one feet away," you know. And so, we had some studies except it was such a short time; in fact, we had to have petitions delivered the morning of the election. I mean, to try and qualify. But I think we got 250,000 or 300,000 signatures. And we could have qualified

- had we really had the opportunity to have set it up so that we could have volunteers. But it's pretty hard to get the people who will set up in front of a poll . . .
- MORRIS: A polling place. That means you're trying to get a decision out of somebody on election day.
- GANN: That's right. One nice thing about that, and one reason that it is good, if you're successful at it, is the fact that you come out of your polling place. I'm pretty sure that you are a voter or you wouldn't have been in there. So you don't have to wonder then when you count the signatures. You almost know that those people are qualified, and what's a qualified voter; that's someone who's going to cast a ballot.
- MORRIS: Okay, so on election day '78, you were collecting signatures for the next election.
- GANN: That was with Proposition 4, yes, in '79. In November, not June. The June primary was Proposition 13. We didn't do this with 13, but we did this with Proposition 4.
- MORRIS: Right, but you were doing this to qualify Prop. 4 for the next election.
- GANN: Yes, and then, of course, they called a special election on it. [Governor] Brown did, for busing, you remember in '79.
- MORRIS: That was Senator [Alan] Robbins' measure about Los Angeles.¹
- GANN: Yes, the busing measure. And the law in the state of California says that if you have qualified an issue, it goes on the next ballot, statewide ballot. If it's a special or a primary or a general. So here we are, not even thinking about fighting for a yes vote until June of '80. And then we suddenly find that we're going to have to get a yes vote in '79. And we did, of course, we got a tremendous majority of the voters, almost, just a fraction under seventy-five out of every hundred people. But then . . .
- MORRIS: Did the public's ideas about the busing measure have any impact on their ideas about Prop. 4?
- GANN: I don't think so because we fought strictly for Proposition 4, and the reason for that Proposition 4 is the almost left-handed manner that people elected to public office and

1. Proposition 1, November 1979.

appointed to public office were trying to destroy Proposition 13 before it was a year old.

And I said, "Well, if they're going to take this attitude, why don't we put a cap on the budget." You know. And so it went very well, and the reason that we had the success we did is that the counties, many of the towns, and cities said that the thing that 13 hurt them more than any other way and the thing that made it hard for them to live with 13 was the state of California mandating programs on them. And I said, "Well, can I help you if we said the state could not mandate a program without your request, that is a local government entity's request, unless the state pays for it." And they said that would just be tremendous. Well, we did it.

Court Challenges; Pacific Legal Foundation

GANN: And the state ignored it for years and they're still ignoring it. But they sued finally, the counties did, and they won in the lower court. Then the Third Appellate District ruled against the lower court, now it's in the higher court.

MORRIS: This is still going on about Prop 4?

GANN: Yes, and the state will owe local governments eons of millions of dollars if and when the court rules becauseYou see, we brag about local government. Local government is put in a position where they can't survive by the state of California's legislative body.

MORRIS: Did you have somebody from the People's Advocate organization monitoring and participating in these trials?

GANN: In the trials? Oh, yes. In fact, let me tell you the greatest, I mean, maybe I shouldn't say this--but anyway, a great legal firm is Pacific Legal Foundation. They have fought--by the way, just three or four weeks ago, they won another fight in one of the counties on Proposition 4.

The local government said, Proposition 4 does not cover retirement benefits, that comes out of the budget and it isn't covered in the budget. So we disagreed of course, and Pacific Legal Foundation handled the legal end of it. The lower court didn't agree. But then we, Pacific Legal, appealed that. Three weeks or four weeks ago, the appeal

court said, "Lower court, you're off your block. That's unconstitutional." They had to give the money back. So now they'll really hate me. And they spent that money.

MORRIS: Has Pacific Legal Foundation taken cases as a friend of People's Advocate?

GANN: Oh, yes. In fact, they have. . . . I would have had to raise a lot more money had Pacific Legal Foundation--had I had to just go out and get a body of attorneys to fight the people's battle. And I hope the people would realize that because they do have to work and they do have to pay rent and they do have to hire a staff because they're just as responsible as the attorney in a private. . . .
[Interruption]

Assembly Speaker Willie Brown; Legislative-Reform Initiative
[Proposition 24, 1984]

GANN: As I say about some of our congressmen. . . . somebody said, "Don't you think we have any good legislators?" I said, "Sure, I've found the greatest people in the world. But they're also a very lonely minority." I mean, you know.
[Laughter]

MORRIS: You think they're more likely to be in congress than they are in the legislature?

GANN: Well, no and you were right there too. As an example, one man runs the legislature in California.

MORRIS: Mr. [Assemblyman Jesse M.] Unruh has gone from us, who's that?

GANN: The speaker. The guy who made Jesse Unruh look like a rookie that just came off the farm.

MORRIS: Willie Brown?

GANN: Oh, yes. Well, let me tell you what he did this year. One thing about Speaker Brown, he doesn't hide what he does. I mean, you can't accuse him of sneaking. But, let me tell you how much power this man has, if you don't fall in line with him in District 23, 74, or 29, or wherever. You're elected to represent that district, but let's don't get crossed with the speaker, if you do he'll put you upstairs in a small office and, you have five secretaries, he'll cut you down to two; and he'll fire the five and then he'll

place two of his people in there so you can feel confident to be honest and outright with them.

And then he can cut back on your mailing frank and your operating funds, and he's the man that says whether you can get on a committee or not and whether you can chair a committee or not. No waits with him. And, as an example, he just had a bill come into his committee that he was the chairman of and, it's an eleven member committee, he's got five votes on his bill.¹ So he just said, "We'll relax here for a little while. And Paul, are you going to vote the next time around, yes on my bill?" "No, Mr. Speaker, I can't" "You're no longer on this committee. Assemblyman Snort?" Switched four committee members within fifty-five minutes. Actually, the bill was then taken up.

MORRIS: Was then discussed. That's an interesting maneuver.

GANN: Yes, yes, yes. So, he raises a lot of money and he spends hundreds of thousands of dollars electing the person that he wants in there, and we wanted to take care of that with Proposition 24, which we did win.² But, of course, they beat us in court. And we did save out of that, in the appeals court, the right to audit them. And we will be doing that if we have to go to court again to force them to live up to the law.

MORRIS: Can I go back a minute to Prop. 4. I came across a couple of suggestions that it had some fairly strong advisors and support.

GANN: Oh, yes.

MORRIS: There was a man named [Craig] Stubblebine who . . .

1. Although the speaker does not chair committees, several members of the assembly were stripped of committee assignments, extra staff, and choice office space in disputes over legislation with Brown in spring 1988.

2. Proposition 24, Legislative Reform, June 1984, an initiative measure to change rules that operate the legislature and limit the amount of spending for support of the legislature.

GANN: Yes, yes, Dr. Stubblebine. And we also had the chamber of commerce, We also had the California Taxpayers Association, and we had many people, many people. We had the greatest nine or ten people I've ever had, except--now, as an example, on Proposition 8, the Victims' Bill of Rights, I had ten or twelve different attorneys that worked on that right here in this office. They would have to come, as volunteers, when they could, you know. So, I was here from seven in the morning until nine at night, you know. Because I had to be here when they could be here. But I never had such volunteer help.

MORRIS: Now were these additional attorneys than the ones that had been working with you before?

GANN: Oh, yes. These were attorneys. . . . in fact, as an example, the attorney that put more into this, the Victims' Bill of Rights, than anybody else was--Ted?--well, I think George Nickerson. George is now dead. But George was here for days on end. And other attorneys would come in and then they would get--we went to the people with the twenty-second draft of that. We would send it out, somebody would have an attorney friend that was well versed in this type of law. And they'd mail it out to him and he'd send it back and he would have--he'd draw big changes here and big changes there. So we would change it.

MORRIS: What was Mr. Stubblebine's particular interest in Prop. 4. Do you recall?

GANN: Well, now his interest was, and so was everyone else that worked on it, had interest in giving the bureaucracy a budget but not giving them a blank check. In other words, it's like one of the senators said to a Channel 3 reporter, you might listen to Channel 3. [Cough]

He asked him a question, he said, "How much money do you think it will take to satisfy the bureaucracy?" He said, "Well, I suppose if I just signed the check and hand it to them," and then he said, "No, I wouldn't do that; they'd give it back and say, Senator, that just isn't enough." And that's a fact. Look what they tried to do now. Somebody kicked over a carpet down there recently and

they found another \$135,000,000. Now, they're worried about that, that they have to get that back

So the people that work with me and have worked with me over the years are not anti taxpayers. And they aren't anti government. They just don't think the government should be a dictatorship. And we should have as much government as necessary and no more.

MORRIS: Lewis Uhler was also reported to be part of your team on the Spirit of 13.

GANN: Yes, Lew did work with us on 13. Lew has the national organization, works more on the federal issue than he does. . .

MORRIS: Had he already started that National Committee for Tax Limitation?

GANN: Oh, yes, in fact, he had been at that for some time. And Lew is still one of the hardiest workers on the national issue that I know of anywhere.

Ronald Reagan's Support for Spending Limits, 1973 and 1978;
Teacher's Problems

MORRIS: Right, he and Dr. Stubblebine had worked for the Proposition 1 that Ronald Reagan had called a special election for in 1973.¹

GANN: Yes, yes, yes, yes. In fact, we stole a lot of that when the governor, now the president, signed that [petition] at a press conference for me.

He said, "Paul, just glancing at this, it looks a little familiar." I said, "Well, Governor, it should." That was after he was out of office. I said, "Governor, it should look a little familiar because we copied as much as we could."

MORRIS: Really?

GANN: And he just chuckled and he said, "That's why it looked familiar." But they lost at the poll.

1. Proposition 1, Tax and Expenditure Limitations, Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

MORRIS: Right, they did. And I understand that some of the people that worked on the Reagan proposition felt that the reason it lost was it was too complicated for voters to understand. Did you do anything to simplify it or anything like that?

GANN: No, we didn't. In fact, to me it was simple anyway. And so was Reagan's. But I don't know what happened, it's just. . . I was amazed that it lost.

MORRIS: Really? In '73?

GANN: Oh, yes. Anyway, it did: but it was a good bill and what we wanted primarily was to stop the state from mandating programs in local government that local government benefits didn't reflect, didn't want. We did that. Now, we wanted to say that the government could not just continue to increase the size of its budget because 13, 13 had two motives. Motive number one, oh, I don't know whether it was number one or not, but the two motives were to cut property tax and reduce the size of government because, well--they'll imply that they did that, yet we'll probably have 40,000 more people working for the state of California today than we did in 1978.

MORRIS: But, again, on the theory that the people are the government, what I've heard a lot about is that large numbers of people who are not very well off, have even harder trouble since 13 getting some help from government for health care and education.

GANN: That isn't true. The budget has grown every year. As an example, the present governor [George Deukmejian] has increased the legislation budget three or four billion dollars since he's been in. Billion not million. And so (I wish I had it) but we have the most beautiful article here, that we cut out of the newspaper written by a teacher who couldn't sign it because she wanted to remain a teacher.

But she said, "I've been teaching school for years and I have a good job, I get well paid for eight and a half months a year and I work seven hours a day and I have all the benefits that go along with it. And yet, we in education today never get together as a group of teachers and talk about how we can motivate and do a better job of educating." She said, "No, we talk about the brats and

won't it be nice to get rid of them and what kind of clothes you're going to wear next year or next week." And she said, "I never join with a group of teachers at a luncheon or something like that ever talk about educating those kids. In twenty years."

MORRIS: Really, oh my.

GANN: And so, when you think of that. . . . she said many people say a nine-month school year, but that isn't true. Because we have a month off in the holiday season, Christmas and New Year's.

MORRIS: Yes, all together.

GANN: So basically they aren't that bad off. I think we are number three or fourth state in pay. New York is one state above us in pay and cost and one state below us in educating the children.

MORRIS: Oh, my. Were there some differences of opinion with Howard Jarvis at that point in '79?

GANN: No, Howard finally did endorse 4. But he didn't work for it because, like me, he's always involved in something. And so--but he did endorse it nationally.

[Interruption]

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

Legislative Leaders Dan Boatwright and Leo McCarthy

MORRIS: I wanted to ask you also about Assemblyman [Daniel E.] Dan Boatwright, who was Democratic chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. The article that I read said that he joined forces with you on your Proposition 4. Now, how did that come about?

GANN: Well, you find that some Americans do what they feel like is right for America and the people who pay the bill. And Dan was one of them, Dan Boatwright. And that was a tremendous asset, believe me, because the man is a man of integrity and is respected on both sides of it. And that's as it should be.

MORRIS: Had you been trying to talk with him and get his support for your proposition?

GANN: Well, I had known Dan since those days but, no, I didn't talk to him. He thought my thing was the proper thing to do, and that's the reason I admired him was simply because he had courage enough to do what he thought was right, not what somebody else thought was right. So . . .

MORRIS: So he came out and sat down with your committee?

GANN: Not only that, but he spoke on behalf of Proposition 13.

MORRIS: To the governor or the legislature?

GANN: No, the governor didn't speak in favor, he thought As a matter of fact. Leo McCarthy almost destroyed I debated Leo all over the state of California because--and Leo was saying to the people that we only have two and a half billion dollars in reserve funds. And the night before the election, we debated Leo on statewide television and I said, "Leo, I'd give anything in the world if I could tell you the truth and how to find out the truth for yourself, but since you've fired the people, I can't give you their names." But anyway, he said, "Now, you're going to be awfully embarrassed if 13 wins because people are going to know that you were wrong."

And I knew how wrong I was, but I never tried to state a position above--as an example, I said that we would have a million signatures for Prop. 13, but I had talked to the people in the counties that I knew that were handling it for us and I knew we would have over, and the reporter said to me, "Well, how much over a million will you have, Mr. Gann?"

And I said, "I don't know, but I'll tell you just after the secretary of state makes her report. And I know it's going to be a million, or a million plus. What the plus is, I don't know." But, you see, what I was driving for and working for, and still do, is to make the people understand out there that politics, quote, "It's not crooked, crooks get into politics." And you can be honest and be in politics and that is the point that I was trying to make and that's the reason that I stuck to the five-and-a-half billion plus. And we had plus, two billion, two-and-a-half billion more. But then, you see, the reason that I was--was

rather incensed with Leo because Leo was the governor's friend and he was taking the hatchet for the governor [Edmund G. Brown, Jr.]

MORRIS: As the speaker.

GANN: That's right. And so then, I was at the joint session--a few days later after the election and the governor called a a joint session of the legislature--and he admitted that 13 had won. But anyway, he spent, in twelve-and-a-half minutes, four-and-a-half billion dollars, and we only had two-and-a-half billion to go.

And I said, "Now, I was raised by a minister and was raised on corn bread and black-eyed peas, miracles, but here's a man who just spoke into existence a hard-cash miracle with two billion dollars in twelve-and-a-half minutes." You see, that doesn't impress those people out there, as they should be impressed. It impresses them but it impresses them with the fact that, who can you trust? That frightens me more than Russia does.

MORRIS: Well, by the time it came along to Prop. 4, who were the Democrats that were working with you? If you got Dan Boatwright on your side, that sounds like there would be some Republican legislators on your side too.

GANN: Oh, we did have. In fact, we had a dozen, we had several Republicans, several. I didn't list them, because I didn't know how long they were going to talk about having been for it, had it have been defeated. You know. But, we had. . . . I think, basically the Republican party supported us. I mean, they may not have endorsed it publicly but many Republicans worked for it. Chambers of commerce throughout the state, almost all of them worked with us, and it was the thing.

Today when somebody calls me up and complains about it, and I say--and I just said that to a wise guy in Butte County recently, I said, "Hey, if you dislike Proposition 13 as much as you say you do, don't bitch at me about it. You know, I'm the only man that's ever voted four-and-a-half million times at one election, you know. The people out there are the ones that voted, so here's what I suggest that you do, sir. You go out and get yourself 600,000 valid

signatures, and the secretary of state will put you on the next ballot to repeal Proposition 13. And all you have to do is go out there and get about four-and-a-half or five million people to vote against it and vote the way you want them to vote. Then there'll be another proposition, that's what I'd do. Except I happen to be for it."

So it's true that the complainers--and the same thing with the other issues that we have come up with, it's the people who are standing, quote (and I kid them) "who are standing in the public money trough up to their knee caps are our greatest opposers"--I never hear those people, any of them, worry about the person that pays the bill. And without that person that pays the bill in the country, and them also, they also fall in the river, you know.

VI. U.S. SENATE CAMPAIGN, 1980

Need for Citizen Legislators

MORRIS: Was it Republicans in the legislature that started talking to you about running for [U.S.] Senate yourself?

GANN: Oh, yes, and then the party itself, all the way from the United States Senate and other states as well, felt like everybody knew [Senator Alan] Cranston was strong, but if someone could beat him, it felt like it would be me. And I would have beat him, had they [the party] given me the money that they had indicated they would give me.

MORRIS: Well, when did Justin Dart . . .

GANN: Justin was always a good friend, always . . .

MORRIS: Had he been helpful on Prop. 13?

GANN: Oh, Justin had been helpful on almost everything that we had done and the thing I--there again, is one of the things that I like about Justin Dart, he was kind of like the San Francisco doctor that wants to work with me. He'd come out front because, quote, "I don't owe those sons of bitches anything." [Chuckle] That was his attitude.

I detest a little bit, if I could hate people, 'cause I can't, but if I could I would dislike heartily people who

will go along with something they feel is wrong for the people of America because it seems to be the thing that will get them more votes at the next election. I think that we should have, and we don't have, but I think that we should have a legislative body that puts into the Constitution of the United States of America--we don't have--you see, we should have a citizen legislature, we don't. I think Nevada still has one because, at least they did a few years ago, they had the barber and the lady that had the house of prostitution and insurance people, somebody--not, not, not vultures but, yes--not large companies but people who had to go out and make a living. And we've gotten away from there.

MORRIS: You and I have been around long enough that we remember when Earl Warren was governor. And he was really concerned that what government needed in California was some professional expertise, and I remember them working very hard to . . .

GANN: Oh, yes, they put their backs to it.

MORRIS: . . . increase the legislator's pay so that they could work harder on the governmental side. What do you think changed that?

GANN: Well, I say it must have worked very successfully with us because until we got the experts in Washington, D.C., the people that were highly intelligent and knew how to do it to us--oh, pardon me, then we had a trillion-dollar debt for the first two hundred years, less than a trillion, a little less, and the next ten years we've come up with a three-trillion dollar national debt, so it takes smart people to be able to con the citizens of the United States of America into allowing American leadership to destroy America. You know, I'd much rather an enemy country would try it because at least we could shoot back. But, no, I think it's utterly ridiculous, I've said for years that we would hit the third trillion dollars in the '89-'90 budget year but we're going to beat that.

Now, why does that frighten me? It frightens me because when you think about it, there's almost no way that the taxpayer can survive and pay that. You know. Because we're paying in more taxes now than we've ever paid in in our lives. We're paying about, close to 52 cents out of a

dollar. Now a few years ago, it was 40. Then 42, then 44. But now it's 52, about 52, the last word that I got on the subject matter by a specialist, and then we're having to borrow a billion to 250-billion dollars a year. For what? To keep everybody living high on the hog. And that's precisely the way countries have always been destroyed over the years: not when people were hustling for a buck but when they were living high on the hog; they became careless. As we know, fifty-eight million people didn't vote for the president of the United States in the presidential election, the last election.

MORRIS: How does that compare with other countries?

GANN: Oh, well in fact, many other countries vote 70, 80, 90, and 95 percent. Of course, I don't want us to be like Russia but I think Russia votes pretty close to a 100 percent. They have a choice, they can vote for the one person who's seeking the office. But we're free and to be free and remain free is to be responsible. Freedom and responsibility, as I told you before, are Siamese twins. And we aren't responsible today. One of the reasons is that they started saying to people years ago, "Don't worry, if you don't like it, quit. Because big daddy will take care of you." Now, I believe we should take care of people who are unable to take care of themselves, but we shouldn't train them to be unable to take care of themselves. Because we are losing America, not from without but from within.

MORRIS: Were there some people in the governor's office, going back to the Reagan administration, that were helpful in encouraging People's Advocate to develop your program? Had you worked with the governor on the Prop. 1 campaign?

GANN: No, I hadn't, in fact. Yes, quietly, but not as an active person with a group. But, I, even today I'm a little--maybe I overdo it; I don't think I do and it isn't out of respect for the people in the government--it's just that I have never thought to get the people in the government, the bureaucracy, to endorse what I do because I feel like that the people out there that pay the bills are the ones that I'm working for. And that's who I go to. As I say, I'm kidded about it occasionally. But when you think about it,

the bureaucracy creates the opposition but--and nobody ever worries about that person out there paying taxes that he or she can really not afford to pay--but the people that take an oath to look after those people and see to it that we get a dollar's worth of merchandise for a dollar spent, are very careless. Very careless about money.

And the fact is that we have had, just this year, an occasion that was brought to our attention by a local government, and the supervisor had just fired a man that had been hired to look after their hospital, the county and city hospital. And at a good salary, for four years, a four-year contract. So after seven years without renewing that contract, they called him in and fired him.

Well, his attorney was there within a day or two and said, "You shouldn't have done that because he has a four-year contract." They said, "Not anymore, he had a four-year contract but he's been here for seven years."

And he said, "Well, you should have read the fine print, it renews. Consistently. But my client is not a graceless person so I'd like to work out a settlement here so he don't have to sue you and you don't have to defend your position." So this man is just in his middle fifties, and so we--and when I say we, [I mean] the taxpayer, is going to pay him \$95,000 a year for the rest of his life and we're going to continue giving him all of the goodies that cost them probably 30 or 40 thousand dollars a year to give him, and if he should die of a heart attack or in an automobile accident, then we'll pay his wife 35 thousand dollars a year plus the benefits. And then you hire somebody else for a 100, 125 thousand dollars a year to replace you.

All he has to do now is go across the street or to the next town and get a job at \$100 thousand a year to go along with the \$95 thousand, all off the taxpayer. And to me, that is not the most intelligent thing and if that's what we're electing today, because we are paying those people well, then I would like to see some less brilliant people in public office. Somebody that had the usual old common sense and good judgment.

Committee to Cap the National Debt; Concerns About Congress
and the Presidency

MORRIS: Oh, boy. Were there other committees in California working on similar problems regarding the federal government or was People's Advocate working on both state and federal?

GANN: Well, I have an organization that called---it's subversive, I didn't want anybody to know what I was doing because then the politicians would fight me---it's the Committee to Cap the National Debt. [Chuckle] But I, with a committee, have taken about several thousand signatures back to Washington, D.C. It had taken me fifty or sixty years to get to the point where I didn't believe that those people would do the thing that they said they would do if elected to public office.

I had taken the committee back there so that they could do some lobbying while I was working with the press. And we had signatures from every state in the union. And do you know that that was the biggest joke they had ever seen.

MORRIS: Who had ever seen?

GANN: The Congress of the United States, they paid no attention to it.

MORRIS: Really?

GANN: No, no, no. No, no, no. We shouldn't have to do those things.

To show you the low attitude that they hold toward the government of the United States of America--the congress--is the way they voted, or didn't vote, for the \$12,000 raise. You know. Now they were asked to vote yes or no on that on the last day but then, this was a rookie congressman that asked for that, and somebody jumped up and demanded an adjournment, an immediate adjournment because that was the last day they could vote. And if they didn't vote by midnight that night, it became the law. So if they waited for the next day, they could tell the people, "Well, we voted no on that." To me that was the most insulting con job that's ever been pulled on the American people, is for those people to say that the American taxpayer is so stupid that he won't realize that we've just slipped an icepick

between his shoulders. And we think he's too dumb to realize it. Well, they aren't that dumb. If you can get out there and get their attention, they are brilliant. But they have . . .

MORRIS: They, the voters?

GANN: Yes, they the voters and—I don't know that I want to talk them out of that—but they trust. And our forefathers said, years ago, that the way you lose your freedom is to cease to be jealous of it and/or trust the power structure to the point that the power structure can take over without your being aware of it.

MORRIS: Did you work with California congressmen? Are there some who liked what you were doing?

GANN: Yes, some of them but then, as I say, they are a minority and, in fact . . .

MORRIS: Congressmen that agree with you?

GANN: Yes, they're a small minority, because you see, Congress could not give itself a \$12,000 raise in one year without being willing to increase the national debt. "See," I said several years ago back there, when I was asked the question after I had spoken, "Mr. Gann, would you balance the budget if you had the power to do it?"

And I said, "Certainly." They said, "When?" And I said, "Yesterday." "Well, then, of course, to balance the budget, you'd have to cut budgets, Mr. Gann," this idiot said.

And I said, "Sir, you're even smarter than you look." I said, "I would do one of three things." "Oh," he said, "Then you would close up all the mental institutions and the cerebral palsy institutions?" "No, I really wouldn't do that." "Well then, how would you balance the budget?"

"Well," I said, "Well, I would ask the people that are back here looking after the taxpayers' interests so beautiful, that they stop the fraud and the theft of the taxpayers' money because there's almost enough, if not enough, stolen through fraud and theft to balance the budget." You know. And nobody thought that that made me very bright, but I felt like it was true because I get information from inside of the bureaucracy consistently

because there are some people there that are just as concerned as anybody outside.

MORRIS: In the bureaucracy but not amongst the elected officials?

GANN: No, there are some of them, but here's what happens is that everybody, almost everybody wants to be accepted to the club. And a legislative body is probably the tightest club in America.

MORRIS: I've heard that.

GANN: Yes, and so, am I going to consistently step out of line and be treated ill in the hallways as we meet and pass or am I going to be greeted and . . .

MORRIS: . . . clapped on the shoulder . . .

GANN: Yes, so it's gotten to be . . . and what I would like to see us do is to get it down to the point where, yes, those people should have a salary that would compensate them, but nobody should go into politics--and if I could do it, I would do it tomorrow, if I could cut it down to the point where nobody serves more than one term, maybe a congressman two terms, and that would be it. They'd go home. Because then they don't have time to build up their own little government around them. "No," they said, "There you need the expertise," and I said, "My god, if we have expertise now, I don't know how we made it until 1966 in California."

MORRIS: Was President [Richard M.] Nixon interested in the subject at all?

GANN: No, I have talked to the president by phone or in an audience or in a crowd, but no, those people don't really . . . I don't know whether it's because they don't have time or whether they just don't want to be put on the spot where they have to say, "No."

MORRIS: But, you know, they also say that presidents are shielded from the voters and have trouble connecting with the voter and here comes somebody waving petitions with thousands of signatures.

GANN: And that scares them, because I'm told that some of our presidents, if not all of them, have even had their daily paper trimmed to keep the bad stories out of it.

MORRIS: Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

GANN: So, how can the president be the president of the people if he has a staff that shields him from knowing what's going on? I think that we need to get people in there who are serving because they feel like. . . . and as I said they should have a little--and don't get me wrong--but it should not be [for] a monetary consideration. [A person elected for] a monetary consideration is the most dangerous person that we've ever elected to office because there's always somebody that has twenty-five, thirty, or fifty thousand dollars for certain favors. And we know that happens right along. But the motivation should be, "The country's been good to me and freedom is the most precious thing in the world, so I'm going in there to fight for the people and for basic freedoms so that the generation following us will have the privileges that we have." That's the only way that it can succeed. Each generation has to conserve it for the following generation. What they do with it is up to them. They are entitled to it. So the fight is going to be on, and you'll be surprised at the people who are becoming a little ill and. . . . I don't know about the other half. I wanted to fight this battle but I wanted to fight it the way that our forefathers and our leaders in California particularly, gave us the right to fight. And where the pen . . . I've had people suggest other things and I said, "Hey, it's true, in the state of California the pen is much mightier than the sword."

MORRIS: Well, that's a nice place to stop for today. I know you've got many other important things to attend to.

GANN: Well the press has been calling all day, and I just . . .

MORRIS: You need to deal with them, yes, I understand.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Session 3, November 24, 1987]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

Aside on Highways Appropriations Initiative, 1987-1988

MORRIS: This is the initiative measure on transportation that would raise the constitutional limit on highway appropriations?

GANN: Yes. And we just received a letter of endorsement from CSAA [California State Automobile Association] and the state chamber [of commerce].

MORRIS: I wondered if they had been encouraging you to put together such an initiative?

GANN: No, in fact, it came down to the point where we had to make a decision: are we willing to see a bond issue of three to three and a half billion dollars to repair our streets and highways and freeways, or should we take the gas tax, that is the sales tax that was put on in addition to the gas tax two years ago--should we transfer that from going into the General Fund to a user fee?

So I talked to the people from the department of highways and they said, "If you would, that would take care of the situation." They would be able to plan next year what they did the following year. So I hate a bond, simply because if it's a twenty-five or thirty year bond, you're talking about three for one. Every dollar you have--this was pothole money, and I said, "Well, why shouldn't we take a dollar that we're already paying and fill the pothole instead of taking a bond issue and taking three dollars to fill the same pothole."

MORRIS: So moving some of the revenue into user fees removed it from the Gann limit?

GANN: That's right. The sales tax--in other words, we do pay six cents on every dollar's worth of gasoline we buy. Has nothing to do with the nine-cent tax: this is sales tax. So, one penny of that, remember, goes into local governments. In other words, that would go into Sacramento County to be used as Sacramento County sees fit to use it, that is the official government. Then one-quarter of a cent goes into the same area for transportation. I didn't want to touch that. So what we did, we said, "Let's put four-and-three-quarters of that six cents, let's take it out of the General Fund and put it into the fund for highways." And believe it or not, as small as that sounds, it would run around \$600,000,000 a year. You know. Now, I'm told by the people who vote those little money propositions that that's rather minor, but I said well, I didn't know if it was minor.

[Interruption]

The reason that we decided to try for this, and remember we only had three months, it was just a week less than three months out of the five months, because [Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill] Honig is out with a petition and this petition would, if he wins over us--I'm sure he'll qualify because he does have AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations] and the civil service union, and the teachers associations supporting him--but if he wins then our budgets could be raised statewide with the state of California up to six billion dollars in one year. And then within four or five years, many CPA's [certified public accountants] say that the limit would be limitless. In other words, whatever they wanted to appropriate and spend, they could do it. With our bill, they can replace that sales-tax money in the General Fund out of the taxes that are coming in now, but they can't increase taxes. In other words, they won't be able to increase taxes.

So, you know, when you think about the fact that in Washington, they're talking very seriously on that about

simply cutting Social Security. Now, so far as I'm concerned, the people who can live without having the cost-of-living increase each year, there'd be nothing wrong with that. In fact, I think that those people living on Social Security would even accept the cost of living up to inflation every year. I don't know that they would, but I feel like they would. But why cut the people who are getting \$400 and \$600 a month, why cut out inflation [increases] for them when you say nothing about cutting the pensions of people like the senior United States Senator who worked for us [as an elected official] for eight years at \$22,000 and now draws about \$60,000 a year pension. And close to \$100,000 a year salary [in another job]. He's never retired. But so, they won't go across the board.

Campaign Finances, Polls

MORRIS: Could we go back a minute and talk a little bit about how your U.S. Senate campaign in 1980 was different from some of these initiatives?

GANN: Oh, yes. It was altogether different, in fact, we didn't agree to run until. . . . Mrs. Gann and I arrived about five minutes before closing time. I had no desire to run, but after I got involved in the race, I did want to win it and I had been promised financial help that didn't come through. I'm too unorthodox. But anyway, it's . . .

MORRIS: There was a plan put together by an organization called Slevin and Brown?

[Interruption]

I was asking about this campaign plan that Slevin and Brown put together for you.

GANN: Yes, Slevin and Brown, and they did a good job. They worked the primary.

MORRIS: That's what I thought.

GANN: And of course, we defeated our five opponents without spending money for radio or television--very little money. And then in the general campaign, we had been promised

\$700,000 if I would run because the polls showed that Cranston could not be defeated and if anyone could defeat him, it would be me. And . . .

MORRIS: Who did the polls?

GANN: Oh, they were done by [Mervin] Field and many others. You know, how the politicians do those things, they poll . . .

MORRIS: Well, Mr. Field does a general poll for the media and then there are people like Decision/Making/Information that do more focused polls related to an individual candidate and his issues.

GANN: Yes. And, of course, these were primarily statewide polls. We had no money at all for publicity in the general election. Two thousand dollars, probably buy you a minute on Channel 2 in Los Angeles.

MORRIS: Did you use the volunteers from People's Advocates?

GANN: No, but we used volunteers who had been working with me over the years, of course, and that's the reason we wound up with about 45 percent of the vote, otherwise we would have been lucky if we'd gotten half that. Not having money to buy those thirty-second television spots today is almost assurance that you will lose.

But nevertheless, and I can say this with all sincerity in the world, that I think maybe God was good to me because . . . the reason it had taken me so long to agree to seek the office is that I have watched legislation in action over the years and I've seen bills introduced by people that were really proud of them but by the time they got on the floor, they would like to have gotten their name off of them. I was told in Washington (and this was just people who liked to advise you, they weren't any of my campaign) but they said, unless you cease to be so unorthodox in your political attack, you will never have a chance to speak from the podium, and I said---my wife says, "This proves you aren't a politician."

But I said very simply, "That's all right. It's me, because if it's something I feel the people should be aware of that would hurt or help them and they won't let me discuss it from the podium, I'll just hold a press conference on the front steps tomorrow morning." Those were not some of the smartest statements I've ever made. I feel

like they are, and I'm glad that I made them because that's the truth. I would have done it.

MORRIS: But they're not statements for . . .

GANN: No. Not to get the people to put up the effort to get you elected, who are already primarily up there.

Legislative and Republican Party Support; Staff Assistance

MORRIS: Some of the materials that I saw said that [State Senator] Pete Wilson and [Assemblyman] Paul Priolo and [State Senator] George Deukmejian were involved in your campaign in the primary? Did they stay with you through the fall campaign?

GANN: Well, they endorsed me but on the other hand, we had After the election was over, I just dismissed it, I had lost. Many people called me from Washington, D.C. who are in the United States Senate--three or four people that night didn't know that I didn't receive the funds and they said had you had the money to spend for television, there's no way you could have lost.

MORRIS: Who were those senators?

GANN: [No response]

MORRIS: Was the Republican senatorial campaign committee of any help?

GANN: No, they were supposed to be, but then they weren't. They said they'd changed their minds, so we had time to cancel television time we had lined up. And in fact some of your corporate people in the state of California ran full page ads in favor of the incumbent.

Basically, when they were regretting it in Washington and what could they do to help, and they would like to see to it--had they known about it, the money would have been forthcoming. I said very simply, "Well, that's wonderful. Now, I'll call the secretary of state and see if they want to redote the election."

MORRIS: Rerun the election.

GANN: Right. To me, the minute the poll closes on election day or the day the deadline comes to file your signatures, if you don't have them, you lost. And I tried to say to people--in

working with people, I've always emphasized the one fact that you don't destroy yourself by worrying about what you didn't do. As an example I think it was [President Theodore] Teddy Roosevelt that used the expression that I've tried to copy all of my life and that is that when he ran for president. . . . you remember, Teddy had been president of course, he wanted to be president again, so he couldn't get his own party's nomination so he ran for president . . .

MORRIS: On the Bull Moose ticket.

GANN: Yes, on the Bull Moose ticket. Teddy lost, and a friend of his just came up to him and put his arm across his shoulder and he said, "Mr. President, I am just so sorry. I'm ready to weep. I'm so sorry," you know. And Teddy is supposed to have said, "Well, don't feel sorry for me. I wanted to run for president and I ran for president. The fact I lost is beside the point. I did what I wanted to do. If you want to be sympathetic, sympathize with that person that would like to try it but doesn't have courage enough."

MORRIS: That's a good point, that's a good point.

GANN: And that's been my practice. It doesn't matter with me who's going to fight me on an issue if my heart and my head says it's right for California, for America, and for the people.

MORRIS: It's really helpful for people planning and thinking about taking the step of running themselves to know a little bit more about the nuts and bolts of the kind of problems you run into and the things that worked well. I don't understand the role of somebody like Gary Lawrence who turned up in two or three rather interesting public reports I found in your campaign papers.¹ Now, who is it that made contact with him?

1. In 1980, Lawrence was vice president of Decision/Making/Information, a Santa Ana polling firm.

GANN: My political, my people, my campaign people made those contacts because, you see, what I was doing, I was out there doing what I do today in a campaign to get a yes vote on one of my bills. I was on the road, I left those things up to the committee. My campaign people. I was going from ten to sixteen hours a day, working not with one person but with the people out there. And so, we had people involved, and we had people that were against us.

But I learned one thing, years ago, and that is if you're going to win in politics, it's a numbers game. As I said yesterday, and I wasn't really being smart, somebody thought I was, but I didn't mean it that way, I said, "Well, I learned years and years ago that a person in the highest office of the land has the same number of votes on election day that the street cleaner has."

So I go to those people who are really in a defenseless, in essence are in a defenseless position because they can't afford to pay \$100,000 or \$250,000 a year to have a lobbyist to look after their interests. So I try to go to those people and make them aware of the fact that in America, and particularly in California, we can't be critical of the bureaucracy unless we're involved. Because who is the government? We are the government.

What did our forefathers say, "You'll never lose your freedom to an invading army, they may invade from the East Coast, they may invade from the West Coast, but they'll never live to take a drink of water out of the Ohio River. But the way you'll lose your freedom is from within, when you cease to be jealous of it." Or, when you go home and say, "Well, the power structure has dear old John Whodoneit and we're perfectly safe. Nothing will ever happen to us." And old John Whodoneit begins to feel the great power that he is gathering to himself, and as you gather power, you somehow attract the monetary situation, the money comes with it. And so trust the power structure, but not with your eyes shut.

MORRIS: Ah, good point. Was Wayne Johnson in charge of keeping tabs on the primary?

GANN: Oh, yes, in fact, Wayne has been with me now for, I guess this is the tenth or eleventh year. He still is, in fact, I had lunch with him today.

MORRIS: That's the tall young fellow that was here. Is he working on this new initiative on the highways?

GANN: Right.

MORRIS: Did he come out of other political campaigns?

GANN: Well, yes, I would say Wayne is, by nature as well as training and experience, a very definite knowledgeable person in the thing called politics. He has to be no more than his middle thirties. But he is, and the reason that I can work with Wayne so easily is that Wayne has been with me long enough to where Wayne can write a letter that, I may have to change a paragraph or two, but you'd almost swear that I'd written the letter myself.

MORRIS: You and he think alike, is that it?

GANN: So, we're both aware of the same thing and that is that three things are necessary to me in politics and maybe I am eighteenth century, I don't know, but I feel like a person who is in leadership that has to do with the constitution and those things that make America America and different from other nations—I've said it, and I've been made, "Ha, ha, ha," at many times, but I say that a person that takes a public office and holds up that right hand and takes an oath to do certain things, to me, should be as straightforward as your pastor, your rabbi, or your priest. Really. When you think about it.

My dad used to say, "Son, it's too bad that we won't get to meet him but Congressman So-and-So will be in town today and I would like for you to grow up and be just like him." [Laughter] And I said, "I would like to say that same thing to my great grandson."

I blame us as much as I do the bureaucracy because I've had elected officials tell me that one of the reasons that they thought that they were living up to everything that they had ever promised—until people like me come along and change their conscience a little bit—but, quote, they never receive a phone call, they never receive letters, they never

receive telegrams from their constituents. So you'd almost think they were pleasing them.

I said this right to the official who told me that. I said, "As an example, just yesterday on the radio [I was] saying one of the problems we have today is that the average legislator, many of the legislators, never even know what a bill says before they go down and vote yes or no on it." Which is true, very true. So, I just, I think number one, you gain the confidence of the people, and how do you gain the confidence? And that is by telling them the truth.

Opponent Alan Cranston; Cost vs. Quality of Public Services

MORRIS: Did you feel that Alan Cranston was not telling people the truth?

GANN: Oh, well. Alan Cranston I've known for years. And Alan is . . . so far as I'm concerned, personally, I never had anything to say about Alan that was bad. But politically, he is as far from me as the right is from the left. Simply because he is willing. . . not only Alan Cranston but anybody to me in Washington, D.C., that would go along with the type of spending that they do today, that destroying America, the economy of America, to me is wrong.

I went back several years ago and told them how to balance the budget but they offered to get me an early flight back to California. [Chuckle]

MORRIS: Was this at a congressional hearing?

GANN: No, it was just talking to people that I knew and could talk to; but they said you couldn't balance the budget because the people wouldn't tolerate it, and I said that isn't true. They would tolerate it if you would begin by cutting your own budgets.

MORRIS: Meaning expenses of congressmen?

GANN: At the top. Start at the top. And then call a press conference and just say very simply to the press that what we're doing is destroying the economy of America and something has to be done about it. So, as your leader--and I said, "If you don't think they're your leader, you ask them and they'll tell you they are and they wouldn't lie to

you." But as your leader, we have a responsibility to balance the budget. So, we cut our budget 10 percent today. Tomorrow, we're going to cut every budget within the overall budget 6 percent. And that will have balanced the budget within about six or seven, eight years ago.

MORRIS: Did you have any thoughts or do you still have any thoughts about the distinction between cutting the amounts the government spends and the kind of programs and services that people seem to want?

GANN: That's one of the greatest political voodooos in the world is the services that the people want. That is strictly good vote getting. But I have asked for years in audience after audience, "How many of you people have been down to your board of supervisors or your city council or your assembly and demanded more services? Please hold up your hand. I'd like to meet with you afterward."

MORRIS: What one hears in talking with your neighbors is the schools aren't as good as they used to be. And you seem to have decided now that the potholes in the streets and the highways have gotten to be a matter that people are concerned about.

GANN: That's true, they are concerned about them, and rightly so. But in education, I don't know whether you've seen the Little Hoover [Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy] report, just made to the governor of the state of California. You see, the money that's going on--as an example, in 1970, we had something like 100,000 more children in K through 12 than there are today. We have an added 80,000 people to teach a 100,000 fewer students.

MORRIS: That's an interesting statistic.

GANN: Yes, it is that. And not only that, budgetwise, it has exceeded inflation. The school budget has exceeded inflation. I was amazed in just reading the small piece that came out in the paper about the Little Hoover Commission's report and they say that the carelessness in the school district is horrendous so far as keeping track. And they say there should be an audit because they think that there could be people that would wind up in jail probably.

MORRIS: So your concerns are also about the quality of services.
GANN: The quality, yes. You see, what they have blamed was the taxpayer of the United States of America to the point where they get more money and more money. As an example in Washington D.C., they got hundreds of billions of dollars more this year than they received in 1986. But we're still going beyond that to borrow a hundred billion dollars. Yes, they lie like heck when they say that we're going to, "We're starting this year at a balanced budget." Then they increase the national debt. What they're saying is that instead of increasing the national debt \$200 billion would only increase it \$147 billion or whatever. And people say to me, "Well, it's growing. You're just doing some . . ." I say, "Hey, I have a member of my organization that grew up as Hitler came to power."

MORRIS: In Germany?

GANN: In Germany. Yes. In fact, her mother and dad was machine gunned in their own living room. But she said to me, "The thing that frightens me is that the reason that poor Dad was killed is he wouldn't keep his mouth shut. He kept talking about, 'We'd better stop this guy now because in a few years we won't be able to.' And they'd say, 'Look man, we're all living high on the hog. Keep your big fat mouth shut.' So what'd they do, they killed my brother, they killed my mother and they killed my dad. To shut him up."

Now, they wouldn't do that to me. I 've had a few idiots to tell me they were but [Chuckle] But, nevertheless, my point is simply this: we talk about how you're living high on the hog, but we have borrowed more money in the last ten years against the generation to follow my generation than we had borrowed in the previous 200 years fighting every major war ever fought by this nation, plus educating the kids, because we didn't have quite as much carelessness. One reason: we didn't have quite as much carelessness with taxpayers' money. The thing that bothers me and the thing that keeps me going is the fact that I never have, in my fighting, had people who ever really came out and said, "Hey, I'm worried not so much about the people

who create the obligation as I am worried about the people who have to finance the obligation.

MORRIS: That's the children.

VII. ONGOING POLITICAL CONCERNS

Gann Children as Campaigners

MORRIS: You've got four kids. Have they played a role in your campaigns?

GANN: Oh, every one of them, yes, every one of them. In fact, my youngest daughter, when she was six, was working one street while I worked another one and she was getting more attention than I was getting.

MORRIS: I believe it.

GANN: In fact, my number two daughter, my number three child was the one that led the fight to keep Elk Grove from becoming a city. You know, that was very vicious. Turned out to be a vicious thing. A suburb of Sacramento. Somebody wanted to make it the City of Elk Grove.

MORRIS: I see. It had been an unincorporated area.

GANN: Yes, and it still is unincorporated. But they said they couldn't be beat because they'd been working for three years at the job. Her argument was that the people who are pushing this thing are not telling you the truth 'cause they're saying it would cost you no more to be a city and on your own than it will today. Yet they had a budget, I think it was \$4.6 million. And then when the ballot came out, it was very simple: under the law in the state of California, if you're becoming a new city, you're out from under the Gann limit, if you specify what your budget will go through on the ballot. And so the ballot said that it would take \$12 million dollars, not 4.8. But they said, it won't cost you any more to be a city. But anyway, they did, they won by about 4 percent.

MORRIS: Now, what's that daughter's name?

GANN: Linda [Gann] Stone.

MORRIS: And the six-year-old who's now grown up?

GANN: Yes, it's Joanne. Joanne is with Bank of America and has been for probably fifteen years.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

GANN: Richard, my son is a small builder and also a real estate broker. My oldest daughter is Paulette and she lives in Los Angeles, she and her husband are contractors. By the way they will be with us for Thanksgiving.

MORRIS: Oh, that's nice.

GANN: We're looking forward to it.

MORRIS: Now, Richard was referred to in a number of press accounts. He was your . . .

GANN: Richard worked for me, with me, for a year and a half. I would have kept him forever except my organization can't pay a salary that would . . .

MORRIS: Pay for food . . .

GANN: . . . Pay for his family and his cost of living and his living standard and so on.

MORRIS: I see.

GANN: Finally--at that time he was with a large corporation and he had taken a leave of absence for six months and then again for a year-and-a-half, so he just simply had to go back into the corporate field, that is the free enterprise system, to support himself. But all of them, all of the kids have given time and funds to People's Advocate.

MORRIS: They've formed a Paul Gann benefit society.

GANN: Yes, they say very seriously that, "Really, when you come right down to it, my dad was right when he told me at the ripe old age of ten that freedom isn't free. And with freedom goes responsibility." And that's personal. To me, responsibility and freedom are siamese twins.

Origins of 1982 Victims' Bill of Rights

MORRIS: What I wondered is how you managed to get going the initiative that became the Victims' Bill of Rights while you

were still running the senate campaign.

GANN: No, I wasn't. No, no. No, no, no. That was in 1980 that I ran for the senate. And the Victims' Bill of Rights was in 1982.

MORRIS: Okay, but one of the articles that I read said that the idea of an anti-crime initiative, that became Proposition 8, was being discussed as early as December 1980.

GANN: No. That isn't true.

MORRIS: That's what I'm here for is to check out a few of these reports.

GANN: No, no, no. No, no, no. I had been thinking, in talking about our system in California (not only California but I could only petition California, I couldn't petition the United States) but anyway, I had been talking for some time about the fact that, to me, the court system had gotten to the point that many times a criminal was treated with more respect in the courtroom than the person. . . . As an example, I think rape had gotten so loose and free that I just think that was the final straw that broke the camel's back.

When it got to the point where the women had rather live with that and not prosecute, than to be put on the witness stand and literally destroyed limb by limb and treated with less respect than the hood that had broke their jaw or broke their arm or raped them. . . . and people would say to me, "After all, women ask for it."

I said, "Hey, don't give me that crap. I don't care if a woman walks down to the drug store naked at two o'clock in the morning (I'd rather she wouldn't because I think nudity is terrible, myself) but on the other hand, nude or fully dressed, with the long sleeves and the long skirt and her face covered up, or completely undressed, gives no one the right to force her into a sex act." And so I just finally said very definitely that, as far as I'm concerned, "If it has gotten to the point to where that the ladies that work at the state capitol don't go to the parking area alone after sundown. . . ." And I said, "If we're going to be that much like a dog then I would like"--I was corrected by my wife by implicating the animal, but nevertheless--"If

we're going to be that much like the animal kingdom, then lets start running around on all fours and barking."

I really couldn't stand it because I had a lady whose husband was sitting in my office and she wept because her husband would not allow her to report that she had been viciously raped in his presence, with his arm broken and beat up as well. But he had been in a courtroom when a woman was testifying about having been raped. And he said, "I refuse to allow my wife to go through that." That, I think, was the main reason that I just finally . . .

MORRIS: Did you have some support and some allies from some of the women's movement organizations?

GANN: No, not organizations. I have many women working with me but . . .

MORRIS: There's been a fairly active . . .

GANN: Most of those have come along after Proposition 8. That is publicly. See, I still get those phone calls from people who say to me, "Well, Mr. Gann I agree with you a hundred percent privately, but I can't go public."

MORRIS: How about some of the peace officer organizations?

GANN: Oh, yes. Without law enforcement, I wouldn't have made it. I have many, many people from law enforcement supporting me publicly and privately.

MORRIS: Out there circulating petitions?

GANN: Oh, yes. As an example, I've had officers tell me in confidence--one detective that said, "You know, I've been a policeman for twenty-eight years." And he said, "You know, when I go out at night now, if I'm on night duty, you know what I want to do? I don't do it from instinct, but what I would like to do is park under a street light and get myself a good magazine, put it on the steering wheel so I could neither look right or left and read until my shift's over. Because otherwise I'd see somebody committing a crime and just out of sheer instinct, I would arrest him." You know.

And then, many of them were put through the grinder in the courtroom. Very few people were tried on: is this person guilty as charged or innocent. They're tried on technicalities, strictly technicalities. And invariably, law enforcement was being defeated more times than they were

winning. I just felt like it was time that we, the people, made some changes. And it was a hard-fought thing. The California Trial Lawyers Association fought me day and night. They'd even take me to court to keep me off the ballot.

[Discussion deleted]

MORRIS: Did the peace officer organizations stay with you when you went on in '84 to the Legislative Reform initiative? Or is it a different coalition?

GANN: No, in fact many of them did, but as a coalition, no.

Selecting Issues for People's Advocate; Property Tax Inequities

GANN: In fact, you almost appeal to--you never know when you're coming out with an issue. I try to know by traveling throughout the state speaking to people, in person or radio and television or media wherever I can get to them and get the reaction of the people because what I do, I do because I believe it is on behalf of the average middle American who has very little defense.

MORRIS: So, has it been kind of that you and the people on your board of directors are looking for a middle issue each time to, you know, keep the people's concern alive?

GANN: We never look. I would have to go out with ten petitions today if I did what people wanted.

MORRIS: In that case, how do you decide which one of the issues

. . .

GANN: Then that's where I--we make the final decision by my having traveled throughout the state and gotten reaction from the people as nearly as possible. As an example, do you think that number one, number two, or number three should be . . .

MORRIS: That issue for the year?

GANN: Should that be the issue to come out with. And if they say number three then we go to number three. If they say number one, we go for number one.

MORRIS: Is it to the board or to the people . . .

GANN: To the people. I bring the response of the people and then they see it by the mail that comes and the phone calls that

come. And we sort that out and then we make the judgment as to what we do and how we do it.

MORRIS: Now, do you do a secret ballot or do you do it by a voice vote?

GANN: Oh no, no, no. No, no, no. No, we have no secrets in People's Advocate. That's the reason I often tell people, "Hey, we were told at one time that our home phone was tapped. And Mrs. Gann just made a phone call and she said, 'In case that there is some idiot sitting in a wet basement out there listening in on us, why don't you come out to the house and have a hot cup of coffee and be comfortable and ask us what you want to know.'" [Laughter] You know, I mean, we have no secret closets in the organization or at home.

MORRIS: When you have two or three issues of equal intensity at the same time, do you just hold up three fingers and say one, two, or three?

GANN: No. No, no, no. In fact, what you do is you discuss the issue itself and how the people that have written or called or have talked to us personally, what is their big issue. Right now, of course, one of the big issues is, not to repeal Proposition 13, but to do something about Proposition 13 so that the people who buy a new home aren't paying two and three times the property tax that the person that's been in their home since 1978.

But on the other hand, I have learned one thing and that is, if you have one issue you have a chance to win. If you have three, then you have a chance of losing three. So we try to stick to one issue. Almost every day--at least four or five times a month, there'll be someone in here with an idea. And there's nothing wrong with the idea. It's splendid, but you just can't do it all. If we do, we lose and it's so hard to keep from it. Really.

MORRIS: Well, you've been at it for ten years now in the proposition business.

GANN: Yes, publicly, yes.

MORRIS: Over that period of time, it looks as if you've picked up a growing amount of support from within the legislature. Is that a true statement?

GANN: Well, I think so. In fact, I don't go around the legislature, I try to go through the legislature. But on the other hand, as an example, Proposition 8--now we had much criticism from some officials about Prop. 8, but some of the things in Proposition 8 had been introduced to the criminal justice committee as far back as twelve years before. So, you see, that's the reason California is blessed above so many states now--a lot of people will tell you it's the reverse of that, being blessed--but there's many of our states that don't have the rights that we have in California.

MORRIS: You raise a really interesting question. There's been an increasing amount of material in the press and scholarly articles about the reason for the increase in initiative measures is that the legislature has avoided making decisions on hard issues. Is that part of the point that you are trying to make?

GANN: Yes, in fact, as an example, and I just talked to legislators as late as yesterday, some of them, and I will be talking to more because I'd give anything in the world if I never had to go out there again with an initiative. Because it's the hardest work in the world. It's two years of your life shot by the time you qualify, get certified, get on the ballot, and then win a yes vote.

Need for AIDS legislation; Personal Experience

GANN: I want the legislature to pass a bill that says that AIDS is a contagious disease and should be reported to the department of health. Because, you see, to me, a disease that will kill you is just as bad as a disease, say like syphilitic or gonorrhea that the doctor can cure you of. But yet doctors are calling me today and saying that the earlier they know about AIDS, the more opportunity they have to prolong your life.

Kaiser [Permanente Hospital] has just written to 30,000 people who have had blood transfusions through their San Francisco hospital and they anticipate--what was it--I read it and I think it was somewhere between 700 and 900 people

could have AIDS out of that. Yet, in California, you know, that isn't contagious. The good lord only gives it to us bad people. So out of 30,000, there could be as many as 700 of those people that are bad people. Now, to me that's stupidity and asinine. Because it is contagious.

And my doctor says to me, "The reason I can't report it is that these diseases that I'm telling you that I have to report, don't kill you. But you have AIDS and you're going to die. So I'd have to pay up to \$10,000 fine and maybe go to jail if I reported it to the department of health." Why do we have the department of health? The taxpayer pays them.

MORRIS: Well, the department of public health does have a list of various diseases that they . . .

GANN: Fifty-eight in California. But AIDS isn't one of them. Until it becomes AIDS. In other words, as I said recently, I said, "You mean to tell me that after you're in the hospital and you're dying and you can't get out of bed to go out somewhere tonight and pass it around, then it becomes a contagious disease?" But in my case, had I been that type of person and physically able to do it, I could have passed this vicious thing around for five-and-a-half years without knowing it. That's the reason I'm hoping that the legislature will change that law.

MORRIS: Do you see it as a matter of government programs to treat and try to prevent or is this something that could best be done by your neighborhood doctor and group health plan?

GANN: What's he going to do? Let's face it, the health department, national, just met in San Francisco for a week or ten days. And they finally come out with a statement that there was a time when we said a percentage is going to die. Now, we tell you the truth, 100 percent of you are going to die. So what's a good doctor going to do?

MORRIS: Well, I know how you're running short on time, but I'd like to ask you one more question. You've been through major medical crises other times in your life.

GANN: Yes.

MORRIS: How did you happen to be one of the first people to use penicillin which, you know, has turned out to be something. . .

GANN: It's a miracle. I was in a hospital and I'd been operated on for, I think it was a dozen times, I had been operated on more than that in previous years. But my doctor liked to refer to me, at that time, that was the second year of World War II, as his favorite goldbrick because I was in the hospital so I wouldn't have to go into the army. You know, I couldn't walk. But, I mean, he was a friend and he needled me.

MORRIS: But you weren't drafted into the military?

GANN: Oh, no, in fact, I volunteered and they turned me down, of course, because they said, "If you want to help, don't get in there and menace somebody because you won't be able to walk."

MORRIS: It was a military hospital. Now how did you get from back there [in Arkansas] to Letterman Hospital in San Francisco?

GANN: Because when I found out that I couldn't get into the service--my oldest brother who was too old to be drafted had volunteered, two of my brothers had been drafted and I went to a doctor who was there for that purpose, and I said, "Doctor, I would like to enlist." He said, "Well, Paul, knowing something about your history, let me examine you." And he said, "If you want to do the people in the army a favor, stay out. You may go for a year, you may go for five years, who knows, but you could break down in six months." So anyway, I felt like--and I'm told that I don't think monetarily properly--but I said, "I have to go to work, somewhere, that would help out, instead of going out and trying to make money." And so I went to work for the Army Engineers, as the guy that held the flag or done something else, not as an engineer.

MORRIS: As a civilian . . .

GANN: As a civilian employee. And two college students who were working with them, were carrying a steel about as long as this table is but about the size of your thumb, probably ten pieces, fifteen. And it sagged in the middle and they were having an awful time, so old Dad had to go over and reach down and pick it up and the man in the front fell backwards and it came right across my leg. Well, in about three months I was in the hospital running a temperature that was

so high that I didn't even realize that they were taking me to the hospital.

MORRIS: It was a recurrence of the . . .

GANN: A recurrence of the osteo [osteomyelitis], yes. At that time, the Marine Hospital in San Francisco was taking care of all personnel that was with any part of the services, that is, civil engineers or anything else, and that's where they sent me.

MORRIS: Where had you been working with the Engineers? In California?

GANN: Yes, oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes. I came back. . . . Yes. And so, anyway, that's why I was there and thank God I was. The only reason I got the penicillin was that they were one of the first, not necessarily the first, but the first so far as we knew at the hospital, the first people that had gotten a surplus.

MORRIS: Well, Cutter Laboratory across the Bay in Berkeley was making the initial batches of penicillin for the military.

GANN: So, anyway, my doctor was. . . . well, to be honest with you, he just told me, and I thought at first he was pulling my leg, he said, "We've done everything we can do except for one thing. We're going to try that and I've already ordered maggots."

MORRIS: That's positively medieval.

GANN: Oh, but you know, they still do it. I didn't believe it then. I said, "Doc, you've been pulling my leg for years." "Heck, no", he said, "I'm not pulling your leg." He said, "No." And so in the meantime, someone in the hospital got the penicillin and for some reason, my surgeon was the one that had access to it and I was his guinea pig. [Laughter]

MORRIS: Wow. Are there any lessons from that experience that are helpful to you now dealing with AIDS?

GANN: Yes. And I hope it's helpful for everybody. Never give up. Never give up. You see, the reason that I wouldn't let them take my leg off even at the ripe old age of six and seven and ten was that I felt like at some day there would be a cure.

That's what I say to people out there, the only criticism I have of people who could have AIDS and be

spreading it is: Be a good American. Be responsible. We couldn't help you and you can't help yourself unless people know it. But for God's sake, please don't spread it. 'Cause we owe the generation that follows us more than we're leaving them. And so, yes, to me. . . . I guess there will be a book. I've never given it thought or time, but many people would like to write one, I'm told. But the only thing that I would want on the cover of that book to say very simply, "And who says you can't win." Be a Teddy Roosevelt. Say, "Hey, don't sympathize with me, sympathize with that person that wanted to and didn't have courage enough to try."

MORRIS: Very nice, very nice. Thank you. I know you've got another appointment.

[End Tape 4, Side B]

[Session 4, June 28, 1988]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

VIII. AFTERTHOUGHTS

Long Time Supporters

GANN: [This newspaper article I read said that] out of this group of people, that this one person who had AIDS gave them names of people that he had had sex with. And out of the group of sixty-two, eight of the men that he had sex with have AIDS. One man, see? So I just wonder.

I want to talk to them back there because does that tell me what I think it does? Because doctors tell me that the reason that women are not as susceptible to AIDS as men are--where men have sex with men is the rapid spread. But women can have sex with someone with AIDS. Normal sex, what I call normal sex. Maybe it isn't normal to anybody else, but to me it's normal sex. She could have sex more than once without ever getting the virus because you have to break something; it takes blood mixing with blood. And that's why male against male is so vastly . . .

MORRIS: More likely.

GANN: More likely, because the doctor told me. . . . And he's a specialist and he was talking to about a million people on NBC [National Broadcasting Company]. He was telling me that the reason that a male having sex with a male is so dangerous is that the most tender blood vessels in the male body are in the rectum, and it breaks very easily. And if the person he's having sex with has AIDS, he leaves the

virus there. If it's a broken blood vessel, and then you mix the two. And this is just frightening. [Inaudible] tells you how rapidly this. . . . So I notice that my AIDS office may fund tracing of sexual contact.

MORRIS: Okay. This is in the Sacramento Union?

GANN: Yes.

MORRIS: From yesterday.

GANN: Yes. You know something? That's what we have been fighting for and that's why I went public when I found out that the doctor wasn't allowed to report to the health department. Why don't we get rid of the health department, save those millions and millions of dollars, if we aren't. . . . Nobody comes to me and says, "Hey, let's stop the health department from checking on people who the doctor just examined and they have gonorrhea or are syphilitic." He has to report that within a matter of hours. But AIDS is going to kill you, so you can't report that. Now, we will be able to if we can win a "yes" vote. It's a soft bill, but what it will be, it'll open the door to get to the point where the doctor is free to be the doctor. That's what I want to see. I want to see it become a medical thing. It isn't a civil rights thing; it isn't a political thing.

MORRIS: Do you have some of the same people working on this initiative campaign that have worked on previous ones?

GANN: Many of the people that support me have supported me for years on all of my campaigns. Yes, we have some of them. We only had about just shortly over three months--three months and ten days or so--to qualify. Really, I wasn't too sure whether we could do a five-month job in that time or not. But we did, and we turned in 570,000 signatures. We needed 366,000.

MORRIS: I was thinking of people on the organizing committee, if they are the same as worked on some of the earlier propositions.

GANN: Oh, yes. Some of them are, yes. But what we do is, we try to take our cases to the people themselves. We do our best to remain a grass roots organization.

- MORRIS: Right. But if you're going to deal with 30,000 people as members of People's Advocate and 500,000 signatures, you need some key people.
- GANN: Yes, you have to have key people. Well, we have people that. . . . As an example, people would volunteer. All of them don't volunteer for this. In other words, the people that fought with me on Prop. 13 may have not fought with me on Prop. 8, the Victims' Bill of Rights.
- MORRIS: I see. So it changes from time to time.
- GANN: It changes, yes. But there's always somebody in the community that will work with you.

Modesto City Council Campaign, 1950s

- MORRIS: I didn't think to ask you when we talked before. Didn't you run for the city council at one point in your younger days in Modesto?
- GANN: Yes. I did that. I was fighting a bond issue and I could get very little support. I got no support at all from the business associations, and the city council and the taxpayers' groups were all for the bond. So it was suggested to me in fighting this thing, "Why don't you run for the city council? That way, you'll get some free publicity." So I did. There were only eleven people running for two seats; I guess it was two seats. And I was the only rookie in the group. But anyway, we beat the bond issue.
- MORRIS: Did you?
- GANN: Oh, yes.
- MORRIS: And that was your primary purpose?
- GANN: Yes. That was the purpose, yes. So we were pleased with that because, as I say, we go to the people. Somebody was asking me the other day, "How many awards have you had in your life?" And I said, "Good lord, I don't know. I didn't start out to get an award." To me, the award that I get is a yes vote or qualifying and getting on the ballot.
- MORRIS: What did you learn from running for city council?
- GANN: I just simply learned that. . . . Why I think I would have enjoyed serving on the city council is simply because I

think that sometimes our elected officials don't really get together and solve the problem. They bring in people to solve the problem for them. And I always felt like when you elected someone who takes an oath that he's going to look after your interests as a constituent, I always felt like it would be good if they'd do that.

As an example, somebody was telling me the other day-- and don't put this down because they may have been pulling my leg--he said, "The reason we bring in experts when we have a strike"--you know, to settle a strike. He said, "As an example, two years ago we had a group that was on strike for, oh--we'd been dickering with them for weeks and we weren't getting anywhere. So we brought in a professional and he settled the thing on the second day." And I said, "How did he settle it?" He said, "Well, he gave them what they asked for." [Laughter] That really takes [Inaudible]

Family Memories

- MORRIS: That's nice. We also don't have the name of the town where you were born back East.
- GANN: The first town that I can remember in my lifetime was Delight, Aransas.
- MORRIS: Whereabouts is that in Arkansas?
- GANN: Here's Clark County and here's Pike County, and Delight's in Pike County. I think I'd have to give you from Hot Springs, probably, for anybody who knows that area. But it's about sixty miles northeast of Hot Springs. It's way out in the country. It's way out in the country.
- MORRIS: A small farming town.
- GANN: In fact, I can still. . . . The way I remember it now. . . . I visited it about twenty years ago. I'm sorry I did because when we lived there, they had an overflowing well right in the center of Main Street. The water just bubbled up all the time, just--that's where you got your water. You'd take a bucket out and get your bucket of water and go back in the house. That thing had dried up and was closed over.
- MORRIS: That's too bad.

GANN: It was. And the old blacksmith shop that I--my number-one hero of the world, the blacksmith--it's gone.

MORRIS: Is the town pretty much gone or is there still a little . . .

GANN: No, there's still businesses there, in fact. But it's a small town. It seems so strange now, since we have no small towns, that there could be a town with a few hundred people, or 2,000 or 3,000 people. But it was a small town. Of course, I loved it because, at that age, as I say--the blacksmith was nice to me and always let me come over and visit with him.

MORRIS: Did you pump the bellows and . . .

GANN: Oh, yes. I pumped the bellows. In fact, I stepped on a horseshoe that he had just taken down and thrown out there one time. It scorched a little bit.

MORRIS: Yes, I'll bet. A barefoot boy running around. Did you move around some with your mom and dad?

GANN: Yes, we did. We would move from church district to church district many times.

MORRIS: Brothers and sisters?

GANN: Brothers and sisters. There were twelve of us. There were five girls and seven boys.

MORRIS: That's a big family.

GANN: Oh, yes. They had big families in those days.

MORRIS: Did everybody help out on the farm when Father wasn't preaching?

GANN: Everybody helped, yes.

MORRIS: Are you the eldest?

GANN: No, I'm right in the middle. In fact, we've just started losing our family. My oldest sister passed away around ten years ago. That was the first member of the family. Since that time, I've lost three brothers.

MORRIS: That's hard.

GANN: They're getting up there. My oldest brother living today is about eighty-three years old.

MORRIS: Did he stay in Arkansas?

GANN: Oh, yes. In fact, most of them are still back there. As I tell people, I was too smart to stay back there, so I left and went where I could make some money, and I'm the only poor member in the family.

MORRIS: That's a very modern story. Did they stay in farming, the rest of the brothers?

GANN: Well, no. Three of them did but one of them was in the grocery business. Some of them were in the sales business, the business of selling.

MORRIS: Did they lend a hand to come out and work on your campaigns or offer you good advice?

GANN: No. By telephone, yes, and they all keep track of me very closely. My youngest sister lives in Battle Creek, Michigan, and she just called me recently and told me that she wished that I would do more editorials in USA Today because that's the only way she knew what I was doing. [Laughter] Unfortunately, and I'm trying to raise my children differently, but. . . I've had a good life, a wonderful life, but I never really knew my own family. After I got older, I mean.

MORRIS: Because you left and came out here?

GANN: Yes. And I was never around them. Of course, my younger brother I really don't know. He came along after I grew up to the point where we would be anything like companions.

MORRIS: He's that much younger than you are?

GANN: Yes.

MORRIS: Because you came out here in your early twenties.

GANN: Yes, I did.

MORRIS: Your youngest brother is twenty years younger than you?

GANN: Yes.

MORRIS: That is too bad.

GANN: If I am not mistaken, he's about fifty-three years old and I'm seventy-seven.

MORRIS: So you'd left home before the youngest was born.

GANN: Oh, yes.

But anyway, I am pleased with the attitude that medicine is beginning to take on the AIDS issue because at first, you know, the department of health, they weren't very kindly induced to take the precautions that [Inaudible]

MORRIS: In your own case.

GANN: No, not in mine. There's nothing they can do for me. But my friends and my family and the state and the United States of American people. . . As an example, we talk about in

here somewhere that we have this one, the leader of the group, his name is Mann, and he just got through saying that we had hundreds of millions of people that could come up with AIDS. He was talking at this national convention.

So what I want and what I'm asking for in my bill is very simply that, when the doctor checks you or anyone and finds that you have the virus, the first thing he does is report you to the department of health. And then, of course, they trace you. They come to you and they ask you who you've had sex with since you had this. And that goes for all contagious diseases. It's just that California passed a law in 1985 leaving AIDS out of the . . .

MORRIS: Specifically leaving AIDS out. Whose bill was that?

GANN: That was the mayor of San Francisco's [Art Agnos] bill.

MORRIS: I do enjoy talking to you, but that man is going to be calling any minute now to set up the three o'clock appointment.

GANN: Yes, and I have an hour's radio with him.

MORRIS: Let me get out of the way and let you have five minutes to catch your breath.

[End Tape 5, Side A]

Tax-slash crusader Paul Gann dies at 77

By William Endicott
and Herbert A. Sample
Capitol Bureau

Paul Gann, the former real estate agent who leaped into the public consciousness in 1978 as the crusading co-author of property tax-cutting Proposition 13, died Monday in a Sacramento hospital. He was 77. The conservative anti-tax crusader had been under treatment for a broken hip in the Kaiser-Permanente Medical Center in Sacramento since a fall at his Carmichael home on Sept. 2.

His longtime political aide, Ted Costa, said Gann "succumbed from pneumonia, complicated by a problem with the AIDS virus."

Gann had stunned followers in June 1987 by announcing that the virus for acquired immune deficiency syndrome had been discovered in his body.

He contracted the disease in March 1982 from blood transfusions received during open heart surgery and had appeared frail and fatigued during public appearances in recent months.

His death brings to a close a significant

and controversial chapter in both California and national political history.

Gov. Deukmejian praised Gann as a "tireless crusader in behalf of lower taxes, fiscal responsibility and good government. . . . He was a champion of the hard-working taxpayer and an outstanding American."

But Sen. John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove, said the Gann-led tax revolt had "put California in a position that places the well-being of this state at great risk." He said Gann had encouraged an anti-government attitude that "prevails to this date."

Even as his health sharply declined in re-

cent months, Gann was gearing up to fight a measure on next June's ballot to revise the state government spending limit that he successfully sponsored in 1979 and double the state's 9-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax over the next five years.

Gann and cohort Howard Jarvis, who died in August 1986, rose from obscurity in early 1978 to take on the political establishment by qualifying a far-reaching initiative whose effects continue to be felt.

Proposition 13 — its name etched in Cali-

See GANN, page A5



Paul Gann

The co-author of Proposition 13 succumbed to pneumonia, complicated by AIDS, his aide said.

FROM PAGE ONE

Gann

Continued from page A1
California's political lexicon — drastically cut property taxes and sharply altered the financial relationship between state and local governments.

The measure has been praised for lowering the tax burden on property owners in the state, but has been criticized for pinching local government budgets and forcing a decline in government services.

The initiative also kicked off a movement that demanded lower taxes and less government regulation, not only in California but across the nation.

In California, several conservative candidates nicknamed "Proposition 13 babies" defeated moderate and liberal legislators in the years following the initiative.

And the political muscle wielded by Gann and Jarvis extended to subsequent efforts, even though they chose to work separately.

The year after Proposition 13 passed, Gann successfully persuaded voters to approve his initiative to limit government spending, which tied the growth of gov-

ernment expenditures to inflation and population growth.

Because of the initiative, Californians received a tax rebate of about \$1 billion in 1987.

Gann was again successful in 1982 with an initiative that altered criminal justice procedures — the so-called Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. He won passage of another ballot measure in 1984 that attempted to reform legislative rules. But it was later found to be unconstitutional.

In 1986, he unsuccessfully pushed a measure that would have limited the salaries of public employees.

Gann also tried to parlay his new-found Proposition 13 fame into a campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1980 against incumbent Democrat Alan Cranston. But Gann, the Republican nominee, was soundly beaten by Cranston.

Behind Gann's many attempts at molding government into something more to his liking were years of animosity toward public institutions.

Waste, he was wont to say, was endemic to government. Bureaucrats were to be

scorned. Taxpayers were society's forgotten sector. Gann's organization, People's Advocate Inc., was the instrument to empower taxpayers to seek reduced government.

"Nobody in our organization is an anarchist or a reactionary, but we see so many millions that are going to waste," he told The Bee in early 1978.

A former car salesman and real estate agent, Gann founded People's Advocate in 1968. He attempted to qualify his first initiative, on property tax relief, in 1976, but failed to collect enough signatures. He linked up with Jarvis two years later.

He and Jarvis were often criticized as unnecessarily pandering to many voters' distrust of government, and their initiatives were lambasted as simplistic, unworkable and sloppily written.

But others contended that Jarvis and Gann tackled issues that elected officials preferred to ignore.

As for Gann, he would dismiss the critics in his best gadfly style as naysayers or, worse, as enemies of the people.

His supporters were "people who don't

like government running their lives," said Santa Monica attorney David Shell, a friend of Gann's.

Since discovering that he carried the AIDS virus, Gann crusaded around the state, pushing for more testing for the AIDS virus and for tougher laws against blood donors who have AIDS.

He also searched for a cure from all sorts of sources, hoping to find a treatment that would reverse the debilitating effects of the always-fatal disease.

Gann had said he was not angry with the donor who gave him the tainted blood in 1982 during open-heart surgery, figuring that the donation extended his life by seven years. No tests to detect the virus were in use at the time of the donation and the person could not have known he was infected.

Gann leaves his wife, Nell, four children, 11 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Rick Rodriguez and Rick Kushman of The Bee Capitol Bureau contributed to this report.

Remembering Paul Gann

‘He took it upon himself to change what was wrong, be it tax laws, victims rights or government spending. His successes . . . are a tremendous testament to his desire to make government work for the people, not the other way around.’

— U.S. Sen. Pete Wilson

‘It is the loss of a public figure in California with whom I seldom if ever agreed but whom I found equally as dedicated to his position as I am mine and usually equally as principled.’

— Assembly Speaker Willie Brown

‘California has lost one of its most stalwart soldiers in the ongoing effort to shape a more responsible government. . . . He demonstrated the truth of the idea that one hard-working person can make a difference in the community.’

— Kirk West, California Chamber of Commerce

‘Whether you supported or opposed what he was trying to do, he was a tough, articulate, competent spokesman for his cause. I always found him to play straight.’

— Assemblyman Phillip Isenberg

‘He truly was somebody that believed that people were the ultimate authority in society. He was willing to challenge all the power structures to try to have the people’s voice heard.’

— Assemblyman Patrick Nolan

‘He will be remembered, I think, as the epitome of a citizen.’

— Sen. Ken Maddy

‘He’ll be sorely missed . . . but I think that the spirit embodied will go on in a awful lot of people he inspired. . . . Paul Gann was the quintessential average man. He didn’t overintellectualize a lot of these things. He spoke in words that, as Abraham Lincoln said, “the commonest men could understand.”’

— Assembly Republican leader Ross Johnson

‘The state has lost a fighter who as much as any contemporary changed the course of California history.’

— Senate President Pro Tem David Roberti

Metro/State

Tax slasher Paul Gann dead at 77

By J.P. VETTRAINO
SACRAMENTO UNION STAFF WRITER

Paul Gann, a leader of California's property tax revolt and a crusader for government accountability, died Monday in a Sacramento hospital. He was 77.

Gann succumbed to pneumonia and complications caused by

acquired immune deficiency syndrome, longtime aide Ted Costa said.

The co-author of tax-slashing Proposition 13 announced in 1987 that he had contracted the AIDS virus from a blood transfusion during open-heart surgery.

He was admitted to Kaiser Permanente Medical Center after he

broke his hip Sept. 2 in a fall at his Carmichael home, Costa said.

Gann burst into California politics only after he retired from private business.

He teamed with Howard Jarvis in sponsoring Proposition 13, the "Jarvis-Gann Initiative" that cut state property taxes nearly 60 percent in 1978.

The self-proclaimed "people's advocate" called his fight against AIDS his "last campaign."

"I have some things I'd like to live long enough to do," Gann told The Union in October 1988. "And one of them is to get rid of the stupidity of people high up who say AIDS is a civil rights issue. America has nowhere to run to get away

from AIDS."

Gov. Deukmejian's office issued a statement expressing the governor's condolences to Gann's family.

"Paul and Howard Jarvis will be remembered for leading the modern-day version of the Boston Tea Party, which culminated in the

• See GANN, Page 12

GANN: Tax crusader fights AIDS, loses

• From Page 3

overwhelming approval of Proposition 13," the governor said.

In Sacramento, civic leaders praised the conservative activist's energy and enthusiasm.

"I didn't agree with all the things he advocated, but I respected him for his skill and how he got things done," Mayor Anne Rudin said. "Even when he disagreed with you, he did it with civility and kindness.

"He made more changes more rapidly in California than anyone I've ever known."

City Manager Walter J. Slipe, who prepared city budgets that shrunk in the wake of Proposition 13, said Gann "rocked the foundation of local government by halting the wave of property tax increases."

"He made us become more responsible and innovative," Slipe said.

Proposition 13 cut California's property tax revenue by \$7 billion and rippled through nearly every facet of state government. Gann's and Jarvis' campaign sparked similar anti-tax revolts across the country.

Gann and the pugnacious Jarvis parted ways following the passage of Proposition 13. Jarvis died in 1986.

Gann continued to apply the state's initiative process after their split, and in 1979 successfully sponsored another ballot measure that put caps on how much state government can spend. The so-called Gann Limit had an even more profound impact than Proposition 13.

The son of a Protestant minister, Gann lived his first 20 years in Arkansas. As a child he suffered from an inflammatory bone disease that required dozens of operations and was expected to keep him from walking the rest of his life.

"So I've had to fight all my life," he told The Union. "I won out over a heart attack, I won out over open-heart (surgery) and I've got a lot of faith. Who knows? I may win over AIDS."

Gann's family moved to California in 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression.

The 22-year-old began his career as a car salesman, then moved to real estate. He declared bankruptcy twice.

Gann once said he got involved in politics as "an old man who came to realize that bitching to his wife about taxes didn't help."

He was sponsor and fund-raiser for California's Victims Bill of Rights, approved by voters in 1982. In 1986, his initiative to limit high-ranking state employees' salaries was defeated.

Gann's last plunge into initiative politics came in 1988. In June, his initiative to raise his own Gann Limit for highway construction was defeated.

In November, he unsuccessfully backed a measure that would have required reporting and possibly quarantining all AIDS victims.

In June 1987, Gann told a news conference that he had contracted AIDS during an operation in 1982.

He said his initial bitterness became a desire to stop the spread of the disease.

"I'm 75, so I started dying 75 years ago," he said. "The first thing I thought was, am I a menace to my family and friends, because AIDS is a death warrant."

Even those who disagreed with his position on AIDS reporting lauded him for going public with his affliction and using his conser-

vative reputation to call attention to the deadly disease.

State Senate Minority Leader Jim Nielsen, R-Rohnert Park, moved to end the Senate's session in Gann's honor. He said few politicians "have been able to capture the soul of so many Californians."

Assemblyman Ross Johnson, R-Fullerton, said Gann "was small in physical stature but huge in his

impact on California."

"Not since Hiram Johnson has anyone affected the political process the way Paul did," Johnson said. "There was no one who was a better advocate of the man on the street."

Gann is survived by his wife, Nell; children, Polly, Richard, Linda and Jody; 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.