

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

ANTHONY C. BEILENSON

California State Assemblyman, 1962-1966
California State Senator, 1966-1976
United States Congressman, 1976-1996

August 26, September 3, 8, November 25, 1997
February 26, March 3, 1998
Los Angeles, California

By Susan Douglass Yates
Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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California State University, Fullerton

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Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

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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.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer:

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[History]

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Session of two hours

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Session of one and three-quarters hours

September 8, 1997
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Session of one and three-quarters hours

November 25, 1997
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Session of one and one-half hours

February 26, 1998
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Session of two and one-quarter hours

March 3, 1998
Offices of the UCLA Oral History Program
Session of two and three-quarters hours

Editing

Alison Easterling, editorial assistant, UCLA Oral History Program, checked the verbatim manuscript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spellings, and with the interviewer verified proper names. Insertions by the editor are bracketed. Susan Douglass Yates prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history.

Beilenson reviewed the edited transcript and returned it with only minor corrections.

Papers

Beilenson's papers are deposited at the Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, and are cataloged as the Anthony C. Beilenson Collection, 1963-1997, #391.

Tapes and Interview Records

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

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Anthony C. Beilenson was born in New Rochelle, New York, on October 16, 1932, and grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. After attending public schools in Mount Vernon, he entered Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, from which he graduated in 1950. He then went on to receive a B.A. in American government in 1954 from Harvard University and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1957.

After completing law school, Beilenson moved to California to join his cousin Laurence W. Beilenson's law firm in Beverly Hills. There he became active in the Beverly Hills Democratic Club. Eventually Beilenson left private practice to become chief counsel to the California State Assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance and then assistant counsel to the State Compensation Insurance Fund.

From 1963 to 1966, Beilenson represented the Fifty-ninth Assembly District. He went on to serve as a state senator of the Twenty-sixth District from 1967 to 1976. During his tenure in the senate he chaired the Health and Welfare Committee and the Finance Committee. While in the state legislature, he authored over two hundred state laws, including the Therapeutic Abortion Act of 1967, the Welfare Reform Act of 1971, and the Auto Repair Fraud Act of 1971.

In 1976 Beilenson won a seat in the United States House of Representatives for the Twenty-third District. During his last two terms in office, from 1992 to 1996, Beilenson represented the Twenty-fourth Congressional District. While in Congress, Beilenson chaired the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in 1989 and 1990. He also served on the Rules Committee and the House Budget Committee, as well as the Congressional Task Force on Immigration Reform. His accomplishments during his congressional tenure included authoring legislation creating the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the Elephant Conservation Act of 1988. He lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with his wife Dolores Martin Beilenson, whom he married in 1959.

[Session 1, August 26, 1997]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

YATES: We're interviewing former Congressman Beilenson. To begin our interview session I wanted to ask you about your early background. I know you discussed it some in your previous interview,¹ but I would like to go over it more in depth. So to begin, when and where were you born?

BEILENSEN: I was born in New Rochelle, New York in 1932, in October on the 26th of that month.

YATES: OK, and where did your family live when you were growing up?

BEILENSEN: Well, I spent my first two years in New Rochelle. We lived in an apartment there, apparently, though I don't remember it. Then

1. Anthony C. Beilenson, "Securing Liberal Legislation during the Reagan Administration," Oral History Interview, Conducted 1982 by Steven Edgington, UCLA Oral History Program, for the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series.

we moved to Mount Vernon nearby, the city next door, just north of the Bronx, just north of New York City. I lived in Mount Vernon, New York, virtually all of my life until I came out west to California.

YATES: Now, where were your parents from originally?

BEILENSEN: They were both born and originally grew up in New York City, and moved out to Westchester County just prior to the time I was born.

YATES: What's their background, or ethnic background?

BEILENSEN: Their ethnic. . . . Well, it's interesting. Their ethnic background was Eastern European Jewish. Actually my mother and my father were first cousins to each other.

YATES: Oh really?

BEILENSEN: Yes. My mother's mother was named Anna Beilenson [Rudolph]. She was the sister of my father's father. His name was Louis Beilenson. So my parents knew each other from their own childhood, of course, and . . .

YATES: I'm sorry, you said they were from New York City. What part of New York City?

BEILENSEN: Well, I don't know an awful lot about that, except that I do remember that at least one of them lived up near 180th Street, which is close

to where the George Washington Bridge eventually was built, I think the same year I was built, 1932. [Laughter]

My father went to CCNY [City College New York] in the city, and my mother went to Hunter College in the city. I don't know much at all about where in the city they lived, prior to my having come along.

YATES: Now, you said that once they were married they moved out to Westchester County?

BEILENSON: I don't know when they moved out, but I came along about two years after they were married. As I said, they lived then in New Rochelle, New York, and I suspect they came out there just prior to that time.

YATES: And you don't know why they picked that particular place, do you?

BEILENSON: No, I don't, except that my parents at that time--my father particularly, but my mother as well--were involved in the publishing business, which they were to pursue for the rest of their lives. It may well have been that that simply was a good location for that. I do not know.

I take it that it was the desire or the hope of a lot of people living in the city to

move, you know, out to the suburbs even in those days, and Mount Vernon and New Rochelle were nearby suburbs of New York City.

YATES: I'm sorry, you didn't. . . . Did you say their names? Could you give me their full names?

BEILENSEN: No, I didn't. My father's name was Peter [Beilenson]. My mother's name was Edna [Rudolph Beilenson]. And as I said, they were first cousins.

YATES: You just said that they were in the publishing business. Is that correct?

BEILENSEN: Yes.

YATES: And how did your father or. . . . Were both of your parents in the publishing business?

BEILENSEN: They were, although it was originally, I think, an interest of my father's, a vocation of my father's. I'm not sure exactly how he got there. I do know that he majored in literature at college. He was obviously. . . . I can tell from the selection of titles he printed-- especially in the first few years, actually for the good many years that he directed the press-- that he was clearly conversant with the better titles, as it were, of especially English literature. So he had an obvious education and

background in that area. I don't know where he first developed his interest in printing, but he was involved in that prior to my being born.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSON: He was involved first in printing with a friend named [Edmund] Ned Thompson, from whom he separated shortly thereafter. I think Mr. Thompson went up north to nearby Connecticut and started a small press of his own, the name of which escapes me at the moment. My father and mother remained, of course, in New Rochelle, New York, and at that time or shortly thereafter initiated--I think by the late 1920s--a press called the Peter Pauper Press and along with it something called the Walpole Printing Office. It was under the aegis of the press that they printed their works that they wanted to publish, mainly at that time English poetry and things of that sort. And the printing office, the Walpole Printing Office, printed books for people who simply came to them for their fine printing. In other words, it was not their own titles, but it was just a printing business as it were, rather than their own publishing company.

Anyway, the two presses basically known as Peter Pauper Press prospered, and over the next twenty or thirty years or so became known throughout the country as one of a handful of the finest presses in the United States.

YATES: What did each of your parents do in the publishing company?

BEILENSON: Well, they did a lot. It was very much a cooperative affair. My father was the printer. My father's background in literature was helpful obviously in the selection of titles. My mother, I believe, certainly later on, was the principal business person involved. I think she was a good deal better in dealing with other people and had more of a business sense in some respects than my father did. My father was in it, I think, more for the love of literature and of printing than of making money. The same interests were my mother's, but she at the same time was more useful, if that's the right word, in figuring out ways to support the family with the press than my father, who was more the poet and the artist as it were. Not that my mother wasn't either. My mother had a lot to do with designing the books

and designing the book covers. She had a very good sense of all that too, but I think she contributed. . . . Later on, especially as the press got larger and more successful, she supplied a lot of the business acumen to its success.

YATES: How large did the publishing company become?

BEILENSON: It remained small throughout its life. It exists now in a different sense actually.

YATES: Oh, does it?

BEILENSON: My brother and sister-in-law [Evelyn Loeb Beilenson] own and run it, but they don't do the actual printing. They contract that out to printing companies elsewhere. But they do all the editorial work and they select the titles, of course. They don't actually do the physical printing the way we used to do.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: It was a small press. In the first two or three years it was situated in a garage under our apartment, or their apartment, in New Rochelle. Thereafter they moved to Mount Vernon and it was in a small building down by the railroad tracks in an area of Mount Vernon called Fleetwood. Never consisted, I think, of

more than four or five printers and helpers, other than my parents. There were two large presses and a smaller press, one smaller press. They did all of their own shipping and everything right from the place. I spent a couple of summers actually taking care of the place while they were off visiting Europe. But it was, as I said, recognized as one of the finest presses in the country. There was then-- I suppose there still is--a group called the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the AIGA, of which many years later my mother served as president for a couple of years. But back in those days at least they used to select what were called the Fifty Books of the Year in which they selected fifty titles which the members felt were emblematic of the finest, best printing in the country. One year the press had nine of those fifty titles, but most years they had at least a few or several of them. So as I said, they were recognized as one of the fine small presses of the United States.

YATES: Now, you just mentioned a brother, correct?

BEILENSON: I have a brother and a sister. Brother, [Roger

Nicholas] Nick [Beilenson], who's four years younger than I. Sister, Betsy, Elizabeth [Rose Beilenson], who's five and a half years younger than I.

YATES: So you're the oldest.

BEILENSEN: I am the oldest.

YATES: OK. Generally, in those early growing-up years, what was your family life like? It seems like publishing must have been a big part of it.

BEILENSEN: Well, it was. After my first two years as an infant in New Rochelle we moved next door to Mount Vernon. We lived at one place on Elwood Avenue for maybe four or five years and then moved to a home on Lawrence Street where we stayed until my mother finally moved from Mount Vernon to New York City many years later. It was about a mile from the press down in Fleetwood. My father would walk to work each day. My mother would drive down later on. We had a perfectly--I think, looking back--normal and happy family life. My mother would drive home at lunch to feed us. The school that we went to was about a block and a half away. We lived a happy, normal life for most of our

growing-up years.

YATES: What role did religion play in your growing-up years?

BEILENSEN: It played no role. Religion played no role at all. We were--we are--Jewish and pleased and proud to be, but we were not at all observant. We did not belong to, or go to, temple or synagogue. When my grandfather [John Rudolph], my mother's father, was still alive he would--although an atheist--preside annually at our seder in our home. But otherwise we were not religious at all.

YATES: How did you spend your free time?

BEILENSEN: Playing.

YATES: Playing? [Laughter] Anything more specific?

BEILENSEN: Depending on the season. [Laughter] No, I mean, it was. . . . As I said, I lived a perfectly normal childhood, as I hope most other children did. We did go away for vacations in the summers, at least when I got a little bit older. We spent summers up at Rangeley Lake in Maine. We spent a couple of summers out at Wellfleet [Massachusetts] on Cape Cod, went to camp up in Maine for a couple of summers in the mid-1940s. We spent a couple

of summers on a farm in Connecticut in the late thirties or the early 1940s.

During the year we just went to school and played on the playground and played around the house. It was just a good time, I think, to grow up, although of course part of it was during World War II, which didn't directly-- kind of sad in a way--affect any of us. I mean, we were hardly aware of it, I guess, at the time. We were still quite young.

YATES: You didn't talk about it around the dinner table?

BEILENSON: I'm sure we must have and I have some recollections of it, not an awful lot. I remember going upstairs with the evening paper. I think it was the World Telegram and Sun at the time, but I'm not sure. I think the Herald Tribune came in the morning. And remembered. . . . You know, because by the end of the war I was twelve, thirteen years old.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: I remember following what was going on in Europe and the Pacific on the maps in the paper each evening. I'm sure we must have talked about it, but it wasn't. . . . We were still

pretty young at the time, I guess, and . . .

YATES: It sounds like you wouldn't have had family members who were the right age to serve.

BEILENSON: We did not. My father, as I recall, attempted to enlist or be of some use early on in the war, and was rejected because of his age. He wasn't very old but I guess he must have been in his late thirties, early forties, and they were taking younger men. He had no prior experience so they didn't want him as an officer so he had to settle for being an air raid warden, which in the beginning we thought might serve a useful function, but of course never turned out to be.

But otherwise, no. Our family was not directly involved in the war. I mean, there were no uncles, cousins, whatever. We had a very small family actually. Just a couple of uncles and neither of them had children, so there were no immediate family members involved in the war at all.

YATES: You were just mentioning going to school. Where did you attend elementary school?

BEILENSON: It was called William Wilson Elementary School. It was, as I said, maybe a block and a half

away. Actually, it was about. . . . Down at the end of the block about two houses away there was what was called the Westchester Cross County Parkway. There was a nice sort of white stone bridge over the parkway. At the other end of the bridge was the school, so it was maybe a block. It was probably two hundred yards to school.

YATES: That's nice.

BEILENSON: Well, it was nice except that even though it was so close, we tended to be late for school just as often as people who lived some distance, because we never gave ourselves quite enough time. But it was convenient. We did come home for lunch usually, though we would immediately thereafter go back to school and to the playground and play for the half hour or so that was remaining before classes started again. I do remember that we all came back for lunch every day, rather than eating at school, since we were so close.

YATES: You didn't want to eat lunch with your friends?

BEILENSON: No, it wasn't that, I'm sure. It was just that we got better food at home. I think everybody who lived within a quarter mile radius or so of

school, which may have been close to half the kids, went home because I don't think. . . . I think few of us came from very far. People used to walk in those days and save money by going home and so on.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: I don't remember much beyond that except that I remember I did not eat at the cafeteria. We came home all the time. We had good fresh salami sandwiches on poppy seed rolls. Things like that.

YATES: Lunch at home sounds better than the cafeteria.

BEILENSEN: Yeah, it was very good.

YATES: What about junior high? Would you have gone to a junior high?

BEILENSEN: Junior high was still. . . . Well, this particular school went through ninth grade.

YATES: Oh, k[indergarten] through ninth grade?

BEILENSEN: Right. So I went there a long, long time. In fact my kindergarten. . . . I may have gotten my dates a little bit wrong, but when we first lived on Elwood Avenue in Mount Vernon--I guess we got it correct--for kindergarten and perhaps for first grade I also went to the same school from a different direction. Then we moved to

Lawrence Street, where we were even closer to that school, and I continued to go to that school. So I went to that school for, I guess, ten years.

YATES: Sounds like there are some advantages to that.

BEILENSEN: Well, there were. It was a good school and there were excellent teachers, I think. Certainly compared to the education an awful lot of kids get in public schools these days. My parents had a wonderful education in public schools in New York City, which is probably not nearly so easy to obtain these days in New York or any other city in the country. Public schools in those days, wherever they were, were really excellent centers of education.

YATES: I know you attended Phillips Academy [Andover] your last two years of high school. Is that correct?

BEILENSEN: Yes, that is correct. The first year of high school I went to our local high school, which was called A.B. Davis High School. It was about a mile or a mile and a half away. We walked to school every day, which was kind of fun. Picked up a lot of friends along the way and on the way back. Had snowball fights on

the way in the wintertime. It was an adequate high school, but not a particularly good one. And for whatever reason. . . . I guess I know the reason. My older cousin, Laurence [W.] Beilenson, with whom I eventually practiced law for a year and a half when I first came out to California, cousin of my parents and someone of whom my mother in particular was especially fond and looked up to, had gone to Andover when he was a boy. He grew up down in Helena, Arkansas, so it was really quite a big thing, I guess, for him to have gone up to Andover in Massachusetts. I don't think all that many boys did so in those days from the South.

YATES: Right. That's quite a distance.

BEILENSEN: Anyway, I think she must have always had it in her mind that perhaps I should do the same thing when I got to high school. So I went first to tenth grade to the local high school, which as I said was OK, but not particularly good. Then I went off for two years, I'm sure at my mother's suggestion, to Andover in Massachusetts for my final two years of high school.

YATES: How did you like it?

BEILENSON: I liked it well enough. For the most part, I liked it. I didn't mind being away from home, I think. I had some excellent teachers. My memories of it on the whole are very fond. It's a beautiful little school. It's like a little college almost. The kids there were fine, were good. I had a good time there. I'm sure, now in retrospect, not having thought about this for many years, perhaps ever, I'm glad I went there.

You miss some things by going away to school, I guess. You miss being with your family, but of course it was only for a couple of years. And shortly thereafter you go away to college and to graduate school anyway. So I suppose the time of separation is close upon you even then. I don't think it was all that good for kids who went away to high school for four years. A lot of them went to Andover and other places for four years, perhaps even went away to school before that. But for just the last two years of high school it was OK, I think.

It exposed me and all of my colleagues there to excellent--mostly excellent--teachers

and gave us a very first-class education, which among many other things made college a good deal easier. It prepared you in a sense for being away from your family, so that you didn't have the difficult transition that so many of our classmates had when they first went off to college, although after a year or so they got over that too. So it would have happened no matter what. But on the whole it was really quite good. The one disadvantage I suppose--I don't know how much of a disadvantage it is or was--was that it was an all-boys school, so that there were no girls around. There was a girls school down the road where a few of the boys went down to and dated there somewhat, but it's a little bit. . . . Not unreal. What's the word I'm searching for? A little bit . . .

YATES: I think I know what you mean. I don't know what the word would be, but . . .

BEILENSEN: Yeah, but it's . . .

YATES: Restrictive?

BEILENSEN: No. I don't really mean that. It's just that if one had stayed at home and gone to high school for all those years, three years, you would have had girls your age . . .

YATES: In your classes.

BEILENSEN: In your classes, as your friends, and so on. And I think that would have been a better, more normal kind of experience to have had. It's not great being separated from. . . . I don't think it hurt any of us, but I think now that young women go to most of these preparatory schools and of course to the colleges as well, I think it's a far better system than we had in those days.

YATES: Where sometimes they even share classes if they're still living in separate areas.

BEILENSEN: Yeah. But even Harvard [University], which at that time was a men's school, now of course is totally integrated. Not that Radcliffe [College] is that far away, but I think it's better when you're thrown together. It's just a more realistic kind of experience to have.

YATES: When you were in high school, what subjects did you like to study?

BEILENSEN: I don't recall an awful lot about it. Let me go back for just a minute to junior high school and even to elementary school. We had a bright bunch of students. As I recall, in either ninth or tenth grade we had to take the New

York Regents Exams, and we had a particularly good math teacher named Mrs. [Rayella B.] Heely. I think nine of us in her class got 100 percent on the New York Regents test for arithmetic or math, whatever it was in those days.

In junior high school at the William Wilson School, as I mentioned earlier, we had a couple of excellent French teachers, so that those of us who had even just a couple of years of French in those days are still able, fifty-some years later, to speak not fluently, but to speak decent French with good pronunciation and often with excellent grammar and knowing all of the. . . . What are they called? The various tenses.

YATES: Oh yes. Verb tenses.

BEILENSON: Right. We really got a good grounding in French and a number of other things. I don't remember much about the local high school, A.B. Davis. We had a couple of decent teachers there. But at Andover, again, it was great fun intellectually to be there. My strongest recollections were of English classes. I had a couple of fine English teachers. One's name

was Scott Paradise. The other was Emory Basford. We met in very small classes, often of eight or ten boys.

YATES: That's wonderful.

BEILENSON: Oh, it was. We read a lot of good things. I remember those days as being semi-idyllic. A lot of intramural sports and so on in the afternoons.

I think in those days, maybe now too, when you go away at high school age that it's perfect for some boys. . . . I'm just talking about. . . . I don't know how girls feel about it, but I'm thinking about boys. Especially those who develop early and are good athletes and are kind of big men on the campus at the time. I think for the rest of us who were adequate athletes and adequate students or decent students, it was on the whole a very good time, not a perfect time, but we obviously were exposed to a lot of ideas and things, and good teachers and subject matter, that we would not have had at home. I think it was probably in the long run good for us, and at the time a perfectly nice existence, although not a perfect one.

YATES: Right. Well, you mentioned several teachers. Were there any teachers in particular that influenced you in any way?

BEILENSON: No. I think the answer is no. I mean, I remember some fondly, especially my English teachers, but. . . . I read a lot now and I enjoy that. I'm sure some of it must have come from that. We had--which I don't think we would have had back home in our local public high school--one course in art appreciation, another in music appreciation, which I think were enormously important just for my private life thereafter. I've been interested in both subjects all my life, I think, from first being exposed to music and art back then. I listen to classical music all the time. I suppose it's perfectly likely I would have picked up on it somewhere along the line anyway, but having been exposed to it and listening to it a lot and having learned something about it in class back when I was fifteen, sixteen years old certainly got me started earlier and maybe got me more interested than I otherwise would have been. Art too.

I don't know, but I find myself more

interested in art and music than a lot of contemporaries of mine, although a lot of people obviously get more interested in those things as they go on in life and find out more about it. But these are both, sort of, extracurricular portions of my life which are very important to me, which I've had from a very early age because of, I think, having gone to Andover. So that when, for example, I went to Europe just a few years later, going to museums and visiting places of historical interest were perhaps more exciting to me than they would have been if I hadn't had that background.

YATES: You mentioned sports and other things outside of the classroom. What did you do?

BEILENSON: Well, I was not an excellent athlete. I was a perfectly adequate one, as I think most of us were. Not everybody. And so sports for me, as they are I guess for most boys and I hope for girls these days, were just an important part of one's life. Basically just pickup games and touch football and basketball especially and softball. I mean, those were the principal sports, I guess, in those days. Nobody played

soccer.

YATES: Did they have formal teams?

BEILENSEN: The school did.

YATES: Yeah.

BEILENSEN: The school did.

YATES: But you played pickup-type things?

BEILENSEN: Yeah. I was not a varsity athlete. I think I was on the junior varsity track team for one year. I was semi-adequate in a couple of the. . . . For the 440-yard dash and for the 200 and something. The 220-yard dash. Something of that sort. But I was never, I understand, that good. I was always a decent athlete and somebody who was. . . . As I said, most of us were. Someone who was. . . . What's the word?

YATES: [Laughter] I'm not helping you out.

BEILENSEN: No, no. Coordinated. You know, I played ball and enjoyed it, as most boys did, I guess.

YATES: [Laughter] Sometimes it's more fun to play pickup games, I think.

BEILENSEN: Well, that's what we all did if we weren't good enough to be varsity athletes, and in some respects it was almost better. You had more time to do other things. You didn't have to

come out and train so much or practice quite so much. You just played between classes or in the afternoons, or whatever. Back home in Mount Vernon, for example, on Lawrence Street in our driveway. . . . We had a long driveway out to the street and we had a basketball backboard and hoop up on our garage. We would play year-round when I was a kid, even in the winter. We would shovel the snow and put up a gooseneck lamp on the back porch just next to the . . .

YATES: To give you enough light?

BEILENSON: To give us enough light. We would be shooting baskets all night, all evening long on winter nights. So as it is with many boys, sports of that kind, informal sports, was a very big part of my life. Back home again at the Wilson School, on the playground in the summers, and in the fall, we would play softball in the evenings, on summer evenings, and during recess during the rest of the school year. Probably nothing that other people in the country didn't do, but I think it was a very important part of all our lives.

When I got to college later on I was the

athletic secretary for intramural athletics for the house--Lowell House--that I was in. We had 350, 400 young men, and I was in charge of intramural athletics there, getting the teams together and playing on a lot of them myself.

YATES: Did you do any other extracurricular activities outside of school that you remember?

BEILENSON: I don't think so. No, I was not one of those people who had any early defined interests, nor was I a member of any of the I remember at Andover I was a member of the French club for a year or two, which I don't remember much about or what we did. I guess we spoke a little French to one another. I wrote a little bit, not a lot, for the Phillipian, which was the school newspaper. I covered some sports and I covered some debates I found out when I was looking through some things recently. But I wasn't an officer of the paper or anything of that sort, didn't spend a lot of time there.

YATES: How many students were at the school? Do you remember?

BEILENSON: I don't, exactly. It was really fairly small. I suppose maybe a couple of hundred boys per class, at least by junior and senior year.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSEN: It was I think 700 or 800 all told, with slightly smaller classes in the beginning and they got larger as you got closer to college. I think more kids came for just one or two years than for the full four years.

YATES: So that wasn't an aberration, what you did, coming for your junior year and senior year?

BEILENSEN: No. It was perfectly comfortable. A lot of my classmates had been there before me, but a good many came when I did in the third year, actually, and some more--I'm not sure how many more--came just for the senior year. And I suspect, I don't recall for sure, that some boys may have come for the senior year after having perhaps completed senior year at home, to prepare . . .

YATES: For college?

BEILENSEN: For college. Yes.

YATES: What were your plans by the end of high school? You were going to go to college?

BEILENSEN: I was going to go to college. I don't think I ever thought an awful lot about it. I suspect, thinking back on it, although I'm not sure I knew at the time, that my mother probably had

BEILENSON: it in mind for me to do what my cousin Larry had done, which was go to Harvard College.

It was quite different, I think, in those days than it is now. Boys who were graduating from Phillips Andover, where I went, or Phillips [Academy] Exeter up in New Hampshire, which was. . . . I was going to say a sister school, but I guess kind of a brother school. . . . In those days graduates from those two schools had very little trouble getting into major colleges. As I recall, and I may be wrong, almost everyone who applied to Harvard or Yale [University] got into them. I think Exeter sent more people to Yale, we sent more people to Harvard. But we had some boys in our class who were at the very bottom of our class who got into Harvard. I suspect that doesn't happen anymore. I think it's much more difficult to get in. But in those days it was almost automatic, I think, for graduates of Andover to be able to get into Harvard or Yale or some of the other better schools. So I and a lot of other classmates of mine with adequate but not wonderful grade averages, hadn't worked all that hard as students, weren't all that

serious as students, were admitted to Harvard.

YATES: Did you apply anywhere else?

BEILENSEN: I don't remember anymore. I have a vague memory of having applied as well to Yale. I'm sure we must have applied to more than one place just to try to cover our bases a bit, but I think . . .

YATES: But it wasn't in your thinking to go anywhere else particularly?

BEILENSEN: No. I had no thoughts of going out west or anything of that sort. I'm sure if I applied anywhere else at all it must have been Yale. Apparently it was a fairly sure thing that we would be accepted into one of these schools. Thereafter, having graduated from Harvard College, again in the early mid-fifties, 1954, going on to Harvard Law School, which is getting a bit ahead of ourselves, but which I went to for a number of reasons. One of which, I had no idea what else to do at that point in my life. I think graduates of Harvard College had no trouble getting into Harvard Law School in those days, even if one was not a splendid student at the college, which I think. . . . I suspect the competition is a great deal more

difficult these days than it was then.

YATES: Pardon my ignorance, but would you have taken the LSAT [Law School Admission Test]? Did that exist at that point?

BEILENSEN: I don't recall. I do not recall if it existed or how important it was.

YATES: It may not have. I mean, the whole idea of college exams started really with World War II.

BEILENSEN: I do remember taking college entrance exams in the field house at Andover.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSEN: So obviously there was something of that sort then. Obviously you had to pass them and I don't recall how well I did or how well one had to do in those days. But I remember our taking them, as I said, in the field house, in the athletic field house. A big open space where the track was.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: I haven't thought of that for years. That just popped into my mind. I don't recall taking law school entrance exams, but I suspect we must have, of some sort. I don't know what they consisted of. But in any case, I think it was much easier to gain admission into a place like

Harvard Law School in those days. Especially if you had just recently graduated from Harvard College.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: I guess they assumed that you were capable of handling the law school, which I barely was.

[Laughter]

YATES: We'll come back to law school.

BEILENSEN: I'd just as soon skip it, frankly.

YATES: Well, we'll talk about it briefly. What was Harvard like when you started? College, I'm talking about.

BEILENSEN: I enjoyed Harvard College very much. It was a good experience for me and I guess for most of the kids who went there. I'm not sure of course. I'm generalizing. The one thing I remember most about the beginning of it was how easy it was for me, and I can only assume for others in our class who had also come from Andover or Exeter. We really were prepared to go to a good college. Classes were easy, didn't have to work very hard. In fact I made a terrible. . . . It led to a lot of laziness and foolishness on my part. I was never a terribly serious or committed student anywhere

BEILENSEN: I was. I enjoyed things well enough, but I didn't work hard enough at classes and I never worked up to my capacities I'm sure. I was bright enough to get by, as most of us were, but I was not an excellent, or even a really good, student.

But I remember. . . . It's almost embarrassing to repeat this but I shall for history's sake. I was taking an introductory course in the history of science, one of those sort of general courses--I forget the names of what they were called--in those days that everyone in Harvard had to take. Really big social science and natural science introductory courses that were required of students, which I think were very good things. They don't require enough of them these days, which expose you to nice broad. . . . Gave you kind of a general education even in areas which you might not be pursuing at all thereafter. We had one in the history of science with an extremely good teacher, a very bright person, whom I enjoyed immensely. In the first half of the class--it was a full-year course my freshman year--I did very well. He commented to a

BEILENSON: classmate of mine how I was the brightest person in the class and I had less trouble than anybody else in the class understanding this stuff. This friend of mine made the mistake of telling me about it and thereafter I just sort of coasted, so that by the end of the first full year, of course everybody had not only caught up to me, but most of them had surpassed me because I was just coasting along, not doing very much of anything, knowing that I was the best-prepared person in the class, unfortunately having heard this through this student from the teacher. By then, of course, all the others, whose first year this was away from home and had had all kinds of troubles adjusting in the first place, had caught on and had gotten used to being away from their mothers and fathers and were working hard and were doing better than I was. From then on I had to scramble to keep up with people.

But obviously we from Andover did not find it difficult freshman year at Harvard either to adjust to being away from home, which of course we were quite used to, but also we found that the classes, at least the general education

courses that we took, were not difficult for us.

YATES: So you had been well-prepared.

BEILENSEN: We had been well-prepared.

YATES: What subjects did you like in college? Was there anything that stood out to you?

BEILENSEN: You know, I haven't thought about this. But thinking about it, things don't pop into mind. Again, I was not a serious student. I think we were given an awful lot of discretion. Probably not so much as some colleges give these days or gave just a short while ago. You had to take certain core courses, but thereafter, especially after the first year or two, you were more or less on your own. You had to pick a major. Mine was American history and literature, but I never pursued that seriously. I never wrote a thesis for example, which was required in order to get something. I can't remember what it was.

YATES: I was going to ask you, how did you get away with not writing the thesis?

BEILENSEN: I don't know. I guess a lot of us probably did. I was too busy running intramural athletics at Lowell House to have any time to

do that. I don't know, I'm embarrassed to say.

[Laughter]

YATES: But why did you pick that? Do you know?

BEILENSEN: Probably because it was relatively easy and because it involved taking some courses which I enjoyed taking--American history, American literature courses. Although I'm embarrassed to say too that I don't remember very much about any of them. I don't remember. . . . One of our sons, Adam [L. Beilenson], for example, when he was at Duke [University] took a course on Mark Twain which he still remembers, and which established Mark Twain in his mind as being one of his. . . . Perhaps his favorite author. But I don't have any similar recollections myself of being turned on to any particular subject matter or any particular author or any particular period of American history. I guess I just did what was required to pass these courses with B's often. Sometimes a little less, sometimes a little more. A-'s, B+'s. I'm not sure what. I did adequately, but not well. Obviously I didn't. . . . I could have done better had I worked harder at it. But I didn't spend much time

doing it. I was never a serious or committed student, which displeases me when I think about it, but. . . . I guess that's the way I and I suppose an awful lot of my colleagues must have been.

YATES: Yeah. I don't know how . . .

BEILENSEN: Not a lot was required of us in a sense. I had some friends who were very, very bright and did very well and wrote honors theses and I guess went on to teach in various areas. I suppose if that somehow had been part of my makeup or in the back of my mind I would have been serious about it. If I thought that I'd end up wanting to teach history or literature or whatever else it might have been, I would have been serious about my studies. But I wasn't either serious about my studies or interested in doing those kinds of things. I just sort of existed at college, as I'm sure too many young men and women did at that time, and I suppose still do, although now I suppose because the competition is somewhat greater maybe they get a better cut of students at the better universities. I don't know. Or you're required to work harder both to get there and

to stay there. But in those days not an awful lot was asked of us and for people who were innately bright enough it was not a difficult four years. You know, they were a nice easy four years to. . . . And although I enjoyed various things nothing . . .

YATES: Nothing really grabbed you?

BEILENSON: No. Nothing really grabbed me or really caught on or inspired me to dig deeply into it, or get heavily involved in some particular subject matter, which I suppose looking back again from this vantage point is perfectly OK. I might well have been sidelined and have gone on into some other area. Whereas being sort of a dilettante and being interested in things in general was a proper enough kind of background for me to become that kind of person in later life, as it were, becoming a legislator who was interested in lots of different areas of life.

YATES: You mentioned this. . . . I don't have the full title, the intramural activity . . .

BEILENSON: Yes, at college.

YATES: How did you end up doing that?

BEILENSON: I'm not sure. Probably I was looking for excuses to be involved and busy so that I would

have excuses for myself not to work so hard, and put my studies as I would otherwise. . . . If I had nothing to do but go to class and study I suppose I would have felt that I ought to work hard. You know, sit down and apply myself. I had always been a decent enough intramural kind of level athlete, not at all a varsity level one, and had always been to a certain extent--it sounds silly saying it but--someone who had some leadership capabilities or to whom others looked to for some leadership. I used to often be the class president back in--thinking of it now--back in junior high school and even elementary school. I think I was usually the president of my little seventh grade section of class, or ninth grade, or whatever it was. I ran for school president in junior high school and came in third, so I was secretary treasurer instead.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: But within my own classes I was usually the chairman or the president or whatever. I was good at getting people to work together and to organize things and so on.

Anyway, I fell in with a couple of

BEILENSON: upperclassmen at college at Lowell House. Harvard College, as you may know, is divided into, I don't know, eight or nine houses. Each of which has between three hundred and four hundred undergraduates. So after your freshman year in Harvard Yard, where you're just assigned to one or another dormitory, you apply to and are accepted to one of these houses. You live in that house for your final three years at college. Those houses tend to become the center of your activities, unless you are academically inclined, as obviously a lot of students are, and then your department of history or department of languages, or whatever, of science, would be the center of your interest. But socially at least, in terms of eating and intramural athletics and things of that sort, the house, which was a fairly large conglomerate, as I said, of three hundred to four hundred young men, was your center of life and activities. That is where your dorm was. That's where you ate and so on. So we had a very well-articulated. . . . That's not the right word but . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

BEILENSON: Well, I can do much better than that actually.

YATES: OK. I interrupted you. You were talking about the setup at Harvard.

BEILENSON: Anyway. Yeah. Intramural athletics were important at Harvard then, and I suppose now, as it must have been at a lot of other colleges too. It certainly was at Yale. Our championship teams in each of the various sports would play the Yale championship teams, intramural teams, at the end of each year. Either at New Haven [Connecticut] or in Cambridge [Massachusetts], depending on where the varsity football game that year was.

Anyhow, I fell in--in my first year at Lowell House, which was my sophomore year at college--with the two upperclassmen who were then called house athletic secretaries, who were in charge of intramural athletics at Lowell House, and started helping them find members from my own class to play on the various teams. It was a lot of fun. And as I said, it was both fun and it filled one's time and it gave one an excuse if one needed one for oneself, as I suspect I did, to account to

myself and even to my parents perhaps for the time I was spending up there. I wasn't spending all that much time studying. I might as well be doing something. So it turned out to be a labor-intensive and a time-intensive kind of thing. I mean, we participated, we had teams--the eight houses at the time--in something like nineteen different sports over the course of the year.

YATES: Wow.

BEILENSON: I should have said that it wasn't so much nineteen different sports, but there were nineteen teams. We played squash for example, which I loved, where we had an A, B, and a C team. So there were nineteen different teams and perhaps ten different sports. I helped these other two fellows to find people to play on the teams, which was difficult to do. Some of the people were serious about their studies, and it was hard to pull them out away from their rooms and get them to come down and play squash or basketball or football--whatever it might be. So I spent a lot of my time in my last three years at college putting together teams.

We did very, very well. When we started, Lowell House was sixth or seventh in the race for what was called the annual Strauss Trophy, which went to the house which ended up winning the most points in intramural athletics. By the time I was house athletic secretary--my senior year, if memory serves me correctly--we came in second. We did very, very well. Lowell House was not a house that was known for being strong in intramural athletics, and we made it into a semi-powerhouse by the time I was through.

YATES: [Laughter] That's good.

BEILENSEN: It was.

YATES: What other types . . .

BEILENSEN: Looking back, at least I did something at college. [Laughter]

YATES: Well, you did go to classes.

BEILENSEN: And meanwhile. . . . I did go. Not all, but I was better at going to classes there than I was at law school. But that took an awful lot of time. It also required in a sense, which was kind of fun, my. . . . If I couldn't find somebody to play on the B squash team. . . . I belonged on the C team basically, which I

played on. But if I couldn't find somebody to play on the B one, in order not to forfeit that particular match, I'd play. I ended up playing an awful lot of sports as well as organizing them. So that kept me busy.

YATES: [Laughter] And fit.

BEILENSEN: Right.

YATES: What other types of extracurricular activities were you involved in?

BEILENSEN: I'm trying to think. The only one that pops into mind immediately was serving on the student council for either one or two years as a representative of Lowell House. I think each house sent a student to the student council.

YATES: Had a rep[resentative]?

BEILENSEN: Yeah. I don't remember much about it. I do remember that I was in a position to win election to such a thing because almost everybody in the house knew me because of my involvement with athletics. I was always pestering them to help out with one sport or another. I knew everybody in the place. It was a very sociable. . . . It was a nice time for all of us. We all knew each other, we all played ball together, we all hung around

together in the courtyard there, ate together in the commons room. It was very nice. I served for either a year or two on the student council.

YATES: What did you learn from serving on the student council?

BEILENSON: I'm sure I must have learned something. I haven't thought about that recently much at all. I mean, I haven't thought about it at all since, really. The only thing I remember about it specifically was one particular experience we had, either my junior or senior year, I don't recall. I was upset, as were some of my colleagues, with the McCarthyism that was then beginning to become rampant in parts of the country, in the politics of the country. There was a McCarthy-type person in the U.S. Senate named William [E.] Jenner from Indiana. I think I'm correct in my memory of this. I may be somewhat off.

YATES: That's OK.

BEILENSON: Who was chairman at the time of some kind of un-American activities committee [Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee] or was involved in activities of

BEILENSON: that kind and was investigating or asking questions about, I guess, activities, perhaps alleged communist activities, on the various campuses around the country.¹ Being annoyed and upset, alarmed, about that, I persuaded my colleagues on the council--the year is either '53 or '54 I think--to set up a subcommittee on academic freedom [Harvard Student Council Committee on Academic Freedom]. I don't recall the specifics of it, but we did that. I was named chairman of it and we issued a short report, or statement, within a couple of weeks which was adopted by the student council at our request, you know, at our behest, in which we--again, I may be a little bit off--called upon the college administration to not cooperate with these people. It wasn't quite that bold, but it was not to give in to them basically, or to be intimidated by these people--the Jenner committee and some others. So we passed this, overwhelmingly, in the student council. Within

1. Jenner conducted an investigation of allegations of communist infiltration of the teaching profession in the mid-1950s.

a week we were reconvened and, I think at the behest of the college administration and--I hope I'm not being unfair to his memory--I think McGeorge Bundy at that time was involved somehow in the administration and . . .

YATES: Of the campus? At Harvard?

BEILENSON: Yeah. At the college, but I may be wrong. Anyway, the administration, or people in the administration, persuaded the majority of our colleagues on the student council to repeal that resolution and to abolish our little subcommittee on academic freedom. So that was not a very long-lived experience. But it was my first taste, I guess, of standing up for something that I believed in, and seeing how difficult it might be politically to be able to succeed in such an effort.

YATES: How interested in politics had you been up to that time?

BEILENSON: I wasn't. At least not in politics as one thinks of politics. I suppose in a sense, when you start thinking about it, by organizing the athletic teams and putting people together and knowing everybody and being the person to whom others turned. . . . I mean, I almost in a

BEILENSON: sense--not really--became sort of a father or brother figure to a lot of the people in Lowell House, if only because they felt they had to come to me to give me an excuse why they couldn't play ball this afternoon or why they couldn't stay on the soccer team or why they couldn't go down to Yale to play when we were going down there. So people sort of looked to me I think, or the hundred or so out of the three hundred and some in the house who played a lot of athletics, to be the person they were supposed to check in with or report to or get excuses from, or whatever. So in a sense, I suppose it was a good preparation for politics in a way that one didn't realize at the time at all or even think of.

I was not the slightest bit interested in elective politics, or politics such as we would think of it now, or partisan politics. That wasn't in my mind at all at the time. Looking back on it and talking about it now, I suspect that was probably a very political kind of thing to be involved in, and probably gave one a good background and basis for learning how to deal with other people and put together groups

of people. Creating teams is almost like creating majorities for legislation. If somebody couldn't come you had to get somebody else.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: But it was fun and I enjoyed it. It kept me out of trouble. [Laughter]

YATES: So this other event, what you did with the . . . I didn't have the full . . .

BEILENSEN: The student council meeting?

YATES: Yeah. The student council was the first . . .

BEILENSEN: I think it played a . . .

YATES: . . . time you really remember being . . .

BEILENSEN: Actually in fact, as I said, I was elected in lots of my classes in elementary school to be class president in a little class of twenty or twenty-five kids, whatever we had. So I was used to being, in a sense, in a leadership role, if that's the proper way of putting it. It's embarrassing to speak about it in those ways, but I guess people trusted me and liked me, or I was perfectly willing to do whatever the work was to run things. I was a good. . . I used to run the class meetings in our little classes in elementary school and did

them well, and I called on people fairly and solved problems and got people to get along with one another. So all of this was good training for what I ended up going into, although at the time there was no inkling at all on my own part, that was suspicious . . .

YATES: You weren't consciously trying to . . .

BEILENSEN: No, not in the slightest. And I wasn't interested in politics, as I just said, nor in, so far as I can recall, public issues. I guess almost no kids are, you know, until they get married, have a family, or whatever. Or you grow up or you graduate. At least you go off to college. You just don't get interested in those kinds of things, I guess.

YATES: Well, what about this particular . . .

BEILENSEN: And our family did not talk politics.

YATES: They didn't at all?

BEILENSEN: No. Certainly not politics. I suppose. . . . They were very bright. My parents were very bright, intelligent people, but mainly kind of. . . . I was going to say literary people. That's not true either. I mean, they were well-rounded people. But I don't recall our. . . . You know, as you read in some

people's biographies or memoirs or something, that they always used to discuss issues around the dinner table. I don't recall that at all. I'm sure we must have to a certain extent, but it wasn't a . . . My parents were not political in any real way at all. They were kind of eastern liberal Republicans, I think, centrists, to the extent that they were anything. But I don't think they talked an awful lot of politics in those days.

YATES: They didn't have strong feelings about events or decision-making?

BEILENSEN: No. No, not that I recall. They may have, but we didn't . . .

YATES: Talk about it.

BEILENSEN: I don't recall talking about it. Yeah.

YATES: What I was just going to reiterate, then, is this issue that happened while you were at college.

BEILENSEN: The academic freedom?

YATES: Yeah. That was the first time you really consciously . . . That you remember identifying an issue that concerned you?

BEILENSEN: Yes, I think that's correct in terms of . . . Because it affected us in the college or we

were offended at the fact that the college seemed to be kowtowing to, knuckling under to, whatever the Senate was asking of them. It offended us that they were doing so and we thought that they should stand up to it more. I mean, this whole era of McCarthyism, for people who didn't live through it, really was quite a frightening and dark time. Frightening is too strong a word, but when you saw everybody just caving in to political pressures when they really didn't need to, I think, was upsetting to all of us, to many of us. But that's the only particular political kind of issue or related to any kind of national issue that I recall being involved in or interested in at all, all the way through college. I did not get interested in politics as such until pretty far along in law school.

YATES: Right. I know you've mentioned in your previous interview about hearing Helen Gahagan Douglas and . . .

BEILENSON: That was the first time I specifically remember ever thinking about the. . . . I probably had no idea in the world what I wanted to do when I grew up in those days. I was in law school at

that time, as I think a lot of people were, because having gotten out of college you weren't prepared for anything, obviously, and you didn't quite know what to do next. You weren't planning to be a teacher, you weren't planning to be an architect or a scientist or whatever. The easiest thing I suppose was to go to law school. It was easy to get into law school, as we discussed, in those days. You could always be a lawyer and if not, you could always do something else with a law degree. Having no other ideas at all as to. . . . I had no idea at all as to what I wanted to do with my life or myself later on. I guess one went to law school, as a lot of my colleagues did, because you had to do something now that you're out of college. [Laughter] You could go to work somewhere, but we weren't prepared for anything particular.

YATES: Did you apply anyplace else besides Harvard for law school?

BEILENSON: I don't remember. Again, I suspect I must have and I probably applied again to Yale. And later on, I've always regretted that I did not go there instead of to Harvard. I did not like

BEILENSON: Harvard Law School at all. It was very large, very formal, very competitive, very unfriendly. I was used to a very people-centered, personal kind of life at the college with all the involvement, mainly in house athletics.

When you get to law school, especially at Harvard Law School, everybody cared about themselves, how well they did in class. We had a peculiar grading system at the time where if you did just a slight bit better in one course than somebody else did, you were. . . . I'm not sure it's worth describing this, but at that time almost the entire student body at law school had grade averages between something like 75 at the upper end and 58 at the bottom end. And there were 450 kids in there. So if you got a 62.4 average instead of a 62.0 average you were thirty or forty people up in your ranking in your class. So there was a lot of competition too, and a very small range of grades to be given. If you were an extraordinary person you got 75 or 78. One or two in each class would. I may be wrong in my recollection. Something like that. Almost all the rest of us got between 58 and 65. And

whether you got 58 or 65, which doesn't sound like that big a spread, it was probably 250 places different in your class ranking. I don't think they do that anymore, but in any case, that's the way it was in those days. What were we talking about?

YATES: I was asking you whether you applied anyplace else, and I was going to ask you how you liked law school. But I think you just answered.

BEILENSON: I hated it. As I've often told people, it was without any question the worst three years of my life, for a lot of reasons. One is because I did not think that Harvard Law School was a good place for a nice human being to be. It didn't do anything good for you as a human being other than teach you how to become a lawyer or do well in law school.

I had been in Cambridge probably too long, too. I had been there four years already and it probably would have been good to just have a change of scene. It would have been good to go off to Columbia [University] or to Yale or some place of that sort. It also would have been good, for me at least, because I'm kind of a people person and I don't like to just sit and

BEILENSON: study or to take my academic studies terribly seriously. . . . It would have been better from what I understood to have gone on to a place like Yale, which was much smaller. I think our first-year class at Harvard Law School was close to 500 people and I think it soon got down to 450 and stayed there. At Yale, as I recall, it was 150 or 160 to a class. It was smaller. It was apparently friendly. One sees now from President [William J.] Clinton's experience that he made a lot of friends there and so on. We didn't make a lot of friends at all in law school. It was not a friendly place, Harvard Law School, at all.

And I would have been. . . . A person like myself, and I'm sure a lot of other people too, would have been happier and more successful and would have given ourselves a much better chance at succeeding with the practice of law, or getting interested in the practice of law, if we had gone to a place like Yale or Columbia. They are both smaller and a little less competitive and apparently friendlier and more nurturing. I mean, not overly nurturing. We don't need that. But Harvard Law School was

totally the opposite. It was just awful.

YATES: What did you like about it?

BEILENSEN: Nothing that I could recall.

YATES: Why did you . . .

BEILENSEN: A couple of . . .

YATES: Why did you stay?

BEILENSEN: I don't know. You're there. You go.

YATES: I'm sorry, you were going to say something?

BEILENSEN: No. I'm not sure. I didn't work very hard.

Obviously if I had worked harder and done better I would have been more happy with myself and with the place. But I was, although I hadn't worked all that hard all my years at school. . . . I think it would have been good, probably for everybody, to have had a year off. You know, to have gone to Europe or something. Or go on out and work somewhere and then come back to graduate school. I think it's a better way of doing it. You were tired of having gone to school and it's the wrong time of your life. When you get older you wish you could go to school now and learn about some things. But when you're a kid--we were still kids to a certain extent--"I've been in school long enough."

Then I went to this very competitive, very unfriendly law school, which I survived in and ended up doing well enough but not well in, got out of, graduated from. But it was not. . . . They were three very unhappy years. I mean, not overly unhappy, no psychological problems or anything, but it just. . . . They were, as I said, the least interesting, least happy years of my life.

YATES: Were there any subjects that interested you in particular?

BEILENSEN: Constitutional law. I had a wonderful teacher. I didn't do awfully well. His name was Paul [A.] Freund, one of those who everybody at the law school always thought ought to have been appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, wrote a few books on constitutional law. He was a wonderful teacher, a lovely. . . . He appeared to be a lovely human being. I found, as I'm sure many of my colleagues did, that constitutional law was a lot more interesting to study and to read the cases of than contracts, torts, criminal law, and a lot of other things. Well, criminal law is interesting actually, but nobody went into it.

YATES: No one did? Not . . .

BEILENSEN: No, it's not much fun.

YATES: It seems tough.

BEILENSEN: Well, you're dealing with people who are. . . .
You know, it's like being a policeman. You
have to deal with largely awful people most of
the time, and I guess it gets pretty
discouraging.

YATES: Let me ask you, before moving on to coming out
to California, about any kind of work you did
while you were in college or even earlier.
What types of jobs did you have?

BEILENSEN: Well, as you . . .

YATES: You mentioned your parents' publishing company
and doing some work there.

BEILENSEN: In many respects, the most useful--not the most
useful, but the most. . . . I'm reaching for a
word or two, but I'm not getting them.
Defining or contributing. Maybe we can add a
word there later on if I come up with one. The
formative times of my life were some of the
summers that I spent on my own. Particularly
three summers in 1952, 1953, and 1954, after
my, I guess it was second, third, and fourth
years of college. In 1952 I hitchhiked off to

BEILENSON: Alaska by myself. At that time Alaska was a much further away place in one's state of mind than it is now. It was a territory. Alaska was still eight years away, I think, or seven years away from becoming part of the United States. That summer I hitchhiked eleven thousand miles to Alaska and back, and spent the summer up in a little town, Ketchikan, in the southeast part of the state, working a number of different jobs. I came back via the Alaska Highway from Fairbanks. In the course of those two months I found myself working in six or eight different kinds of jobs with all kinds of itinerant workers from around the country who had come up to Alaska to work. I learned a huge amount about myself and about life in general, about my abilities to deal well with other people, and to be understanding and tolerant and sympathetic--empathetic perhaps is a better word--to what other people are like and what their needs are, and where they come from and so on, than I'm sure I ever had before, having grown up in a very comfortable upper-middle-class suburban background. You know, having gone to good

schools all my life. I found that I was good at being--as I did at college, I guess, and even earlier at grade school--with other people, even though I had some advantages that they might have resented or looked askance at, at first.

So that was an important formative year. That was the single most important one in a way. I was nineteen years old and both grown up and not grown up, as people tend to be at that age. I came back home at the end of the summer--I realized at the time and I've certainly understood since--with a vast amount more of self-confidence and understanding of myself and my capabilities than I ever had before. I was able all by myself to go off and get across the country and go up into Alaska, which as I said was more like going to Africa a hundred years earlier at the time. It wasn't really, obviously. There were roads and . . .

YATES: No, but that's a big trip.

BEILENSON: Well, it was much bigger, as I said, at the time than it is now fifty years or so later, because nobody had ever been there. There were very few people up in Alaska and it was

BEILENSON: inhabited by strange people. Actually it still is to a certain extent. [Laughter] It's a very interesting place as a matter of fact. One shouldn't generalize about this, but there are a lot of people up there who really don't want other people around and haven't been able to live happily in society back in the lower forty-eight states, as they refer to them.

But anyway, in the course of this. . . . Also I was able to do a lot of physical work, which I was good at. It was just very enjoyable and very worthwhile, and a summer, I'm sure, of great self-discovery even though I wasn't thinking of it in those terms at the particular time. But by the time I came back I realized. . . . That was just prior to my junior year at college. So it ties in, to a certain extent, with my involvement in intramural athletics at Lowell House, and so on. But I was somebody who was used to being out working with different kinds of people. I'm sure that enhanced whatever leadership abilities or coordinating abilities or abilities to get along with people and put [them] together and work with disparate kinds

of people. It must have honed those abilities within me, or brought them out in some respect.

The next summer was a different kind of thing. Along with seven other young men from seven other eastern college campuses, I spent the summer first in the Boston navy yard [Boston Naval Shipyard], and then up in Greenland and then further west in the Canadian Arctic, working on a resupply mission for a joint Canadian-American air force weather station project, which also involved, I discovered many years later, supplying part of our then super-secret DEW [distant early warning] line. Distant early warning stations up in the Arctic to intercept and discover any Soviet raids that might be coming across the Pole, because of course our two countries are closest over the North Pole rather than going around from the east or west. But that too just was a very interesting summer of self-discovery and of hard physical work.

YATES: How did you end up doing that?

BEILENSON: I saw an advertisement in the Harvard Crimson, in our school newspaper, asking for people who wanted to work for a dollar a day up in the

BEILENSON: Arctic. Actually we were paid something like seven or eight dollars a day for the first month when we worked down in the Boston navy yard, where we were helping to load a supply ship with all the supplies that were to be taken up north for the coming year. So we worked there for a month marking all these things and working on forklifts and crating all this equipment. Then we flew up to Greenland to Thule Air Force Base, and awaited the arrival of this same ship, which came up a couple of weeks later. Then we got on the ship and we sailed west into the Canadian Arctic to a place called Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island, where we helped unload the ship for a week or so. Then the ship left and we spent the rest of the summer, another three or four weeks or so, helping to cart out by truck to the little nearby airfield--maybe a mile or so away from this base, Resolute Bay--the various pieces of equipment and the various supplies, food, and everything else that was to be then flown up to the five more northern. . . . I think there were five other more northern bases. They did this just once every year as

BEILENSEN: they do down in the Antarctic every year--I was there three years ago--because they can only break through the ice in August. In fact our ship, that we rejoined up in Thule Air Force Base and then sailed west into the Canadian Arctic, followed an ice breaker about five hundred miles, I guess it was, west to Resolute Bay, and was then unloaded and went back and then down south before things froze up again. It was just an adventurous summer up in the Arctic, which was great fun for all of us who were there, and good, hard, physical work. So whatever that did for building one's ego or one's body or whatever, it contributed.

Then the next year, 1954, I hitchhiked out west and spent three weeks working in various jobs that I picked up in Colorado Springs. This was at that time a very small, pretty town. It was some years before the Air Force Academy was built. It's quite a different place now I understand. Then I hitchhiked further west and came out to Los Angeles, spent three or four days in Los Angeles with my cousin Larry Beilenson and his wife [Gerda Beilenson], then hitchhiked up north to San

Francisco, and then east to Salt Lake City, and then north up to Yellowstone [National] Park. I worked there for three weeks.

YATES: You hitchhiked the whole time?

BEILENSEN: Yes. Then home from there afterwards. That summer I hitchhiked about seventy-five hundred miles. And it was fun. It didn't have quite the excitement the Alaska trip had. I had already done one before, but it was good and it was good work experience again. I met a lot of interesting people along the way.

But in any case those three summers, and especially the first one, going to Alaska and working there and coming back from Alaska all by myself when I was nineteen, I'm sure, must have been significant contributing factors. . . . Made contributions to my own self-esteem or self-confidence or . . .

YATES: How did you come to choose to go to Alaska?

BEILENSEN: You didn't read my memoir¹ did you?

YATES: Remind me.

1. "Looking Back - Stories from My Life," in Beilenson's personal possession.

BEILENSEN: OK. We were having. . . . It's a great story. It's not worth telling in its totality here, but. . . . We were sitting around in the commons room in our dining hall at Lowell House. I guess it was very late winter of. . . . It was in early 1952. It was in January or February, and we were all talking about what we were going to do in the summer and nobody quite knew. One of the boys, young men there, mentioned to us that he and some friends of his had bought an old hearse and driven up to Alaska the summer before, and they had a great time. They slept in the hearse and others took turns driving. You know, some were sleeping, some were driving. He somehow ended up in Ketchikan, which is the town I ended up in the next year because he told me about it. I don't know how he got there because that's nowhere near the Alaska Highway, but somehow he ended up there. He had a great time, and he gave us the names of a couple of people there.

So a whole bunch of us were sitting around the table--there were about six of us--and we all decided we'd go to Alaska this coming summer. We had nothing better to do. I guess

BEILENSEN: we all had. . . . Our families had enough money that we didn't really have to earn a huge amount. We weren't scholarship students or anything. We just had to take care of ourselves in the summer so we weren't burdens on our families for the summer. So we all decided we'd go to Alaska, the six of us. Shortly thereafter we had spring vacation, around April or March or something. We all went home and I told everybody I knew that I was going to Alaska that summer. I told my parents, I told some girls I liked, I saw all my old friends from Mount Vernon who were then off at different colleges or off working or whatever, if they just graduated high school and hadn't gone to college. I told all the men who worked down at the Peter Pauper Press, you know, who worked for my parents. . . . Men whom I had known all my life, who were good friends of ours, obviously. They felt like uncles to me. Everybody I knew I told I was going to Alaska. Everybody thought it was the greatest thing in the world. They never knew anybody who had gone to Alaska. Nobody ever thought of it, it was so far away.

BEILENSEN: A couple of weeks later we go back to college and we discovered one by one these other guys who had all said they'd like to go to Alaska decided not to go. Their parents didn't want them to go or they started thinking about it and got cold feet. The long and the short of it is that by the end of April, beginning of May, I was the only one left who was going to Alaska and I didn't know what to do. Originally, I was only going to go to Alaska if the six of us were going. We'd all buy a hearse like these other people had and have a nice time going. In the meantime, I'd told everybody in the world I cared about or who cared about me that I was going. I didn't know how to tell them I'm not going to go, because nobody else is going. I kept figuring my parents would say, "Well, this is ridiculous. We understood originally there were six of you going, or even four or five of you going, but for you to go by yourself is ridiculous." I kept waiting for my mother to put her foot down or my father to say no, but they never did.

 So it's getting toward the middle of June

and everyone's looking around expectantly at me, so finally I said, "Well, I think I'll go to Alaska on Monday." [Laughter] So my father went down to the basement--he was sort of artistic--and he made a big cardboard sign for me that said, "Harvard to Alaska," so I could hold it up when I was hitchhiking so people would know where I was going. [Laughter] And on the back, in order to get me home, he did a big, "NYC," New York City, so I could get home at the end of the summer. He gave it to me and I put it in my rucksack. When the time came I kissed my mother goodbye and my father drove me down forty minutes or so to the beginning of the New Jersey Turnpike and he left me there almost in tears. I mean, I was almost in tears. I couldn't figure out why he would do such a thing. [Laughter]

YATES: I was going to say, were you scared?

BEILENSON: I don't know what I was. I wasn't really scared. I thought perhaps I'd bit off a bit more than I could chew. I was both anxious to go and to prove myself, because it would be kind of fun. I'd never been out west. Most of us never had been west of Washington, D.C., or

the Hudson River or anything of that sort. I wasn't scared. I'm sure I was worried, I'm sure I was concerned. Anyway . . .

YATES: But you got there.

BEILENSEN: I got there. Five or six days later I was in Seattle. And after getting stuck there for a couple of days, because I couldn't get on a boat. . . . I was trying to get on a boat to go up the inside passage up to Alaska. I just went on and I hitchhiked up through British Columbia and ended up in a little town called Prince Rupert, which is about a hundred miles south of Ketchikan. I had in mind to go to Ketchikan because this friend of mine, [Robert] Bob Paine, who had told us about his previous summer there, had gone there and mentioned the names of a couple of people there, a couple of places he had stayed. So I figured I'd go to Ketchikan too, since I had heard about it.

YATES: That's as good a reason as any.

BEILENSEN: Right, exactly, although it's hard to get to and no roads leading into it because it's on an island down south. You can't take the Alaska Highway, which goes much further north up to Fairbanks and then down to Anchorage. When I

BEILENSON: got to Prince Rupert I had just missed a Canadian Pacific Railroad boat that was going up, had gone up. . . . It had left that morning. The next boat wasn't going for five days or so, and so I sort of stayed in town for two or three days. I made friends with a group of softball players who had come down from Ketchikan, interestingly enough, which is the next town north, to play the Prince Rupert softball team on what's called Dominion Day, sort of Canadian Independence Day, which is July 1. So I hung around with these guys and they took me back on their boat that night. And in the morning I woke up and there I was in Ketchikan, which is where I had wanted to be. I ended up staying there another six weeks or so, thereabouts. Maybe it was a little bit less, but basically for the rest of the summer. It was already July. I guess I stayed there until maybe the third week in August. I was there six or seven weeks. I had a very good time and had a lot of different jobs. The principal one that I ended up in, which I spent the last three weeks doing, was in a fish cold storage plant where we froze halibut, mainly,

that had just been brought in and trimmed it and so on. It was kind of fun.

YATES: So you were able to pay your way . . .

BEILENSON: Oh yeah. I paid for . . .

YATES: . . . by picking up work?

BEILENSON: Yes. The other thing it taught me, not that it was a necessary thing, since I never had to worry about those kinds of things. . . . But just in terms of taking care of yourself, it taught you that if you were willing to work and able to work, that even in difficult situations you were always able just to go out and work. My first job there for the first week was washing dishes at a hotel. It was fine. I didn't make a lot of money, but I made enough to live on. And gradually you make friends and you apply for other jobs and you can take care of yourself. I mean, you couldn't provide for a family or anything of that sort, but if you're just a single man, young man, moving around the country, it wasn't difficult. I'm sure it's difficult at times like the Great Depression or something, where people really couldn't get any jobs. But in most times, if you're anxious and willing to work and you're a

capable worker, you get work if you don't mind what kind of work you're doing.

YATES: Let me ask you a question that occurred to me when we were talking about law school. Why didn't you go into your family's business as a career?

BEILENSON: That's a good question. I admired and loved my parents very much, and I loved what they were doing. I spent two summers working at Peter Pauper Press, I think, both times when they were off in Europe. I took care of all the shipping and writing the invoices--the business end of it basically--and doing some proofreading. A lot of proofreading of whatever books were being prepared that summer with the supervisor there, a fellow named Walter Emerson, who was their foreman actually. I enjoyed the place, I love literature, I loved the making of books, I loved what they were doing. As I said, I admired them very much for it. I loved the smell of ink; still do, because of those early experiences down at the press. But I had never. . . . For reasons I'm not sure I've ever thought about till now, I never intended, wanted, or desired to be in the

BEILENSON: business with them or to take over the business afterwards.

It's a business I really enjoyed and it was a wonderful kind of business where you could pursue your intellectual pursuits and your literary interests and be sort of artistic and creative on the one hand and at the same time do well enough business-wise to earn a decent living and provide well for your family. It turned out to be quite a decent business, especially later on. I think my mother made more money at it than my father did. My father died early, when he was fifty-six, back in 1961, and I think the business made more money thereafter. Not necessarily because he was gone, but because they changed their format a bit and perhaps it was easier then to sell larger numbers of books.

So anyway, they were always comfortable and they did fine, but it was a wonderful life. It's like running a bookstore and making money at it. You know, something you really enjoy doing, that's really worth doing. And here they were, as I said, being very creative as well as doing something nice and intellectual

and fun. It appealed to their intellects as well as to their business sense. They were successful small business people doing a really nice thing. So in every respect, really, if one were at all interested in it, it would have been a wonderful business to aspire to. I don't know why I was never. . . . I loved being around them, I loved being around the press in the summer and helping out when they were gone, feeling a part of it. I cared a lot about it, but it just never appealed to me for some reason, I guess, as something that I wanted to do. I don't really know why. Maybe I just wanted to strike out on my own or do something else. I don't know why.

YATES: Yeah, well that's . . .

BEILENSON: They already had done it I guess. I mean, they created it. One could have changed it and made it much bigger, in fact, as my brother and sister-in-law have done quite successfully in a different kind of way because it's a different world these days. But they were still very much involved in it at the time, my mother especially. My father hadn't died yet, of course. But . . .

YATES: Right. So it just didn't occur to you to go into that.

BEILENSEN: I loved the business, but it never occurred to me. I never aspired or thought that it was something that I wanted to do.

YATES: When you finished law school, why did you go to California?

BEILENSEN: You know, one is never sure of these things after some period of time, but I think I basically wanted to be on my own, sort of strike out on my own. I came here, specifically, because there was a job offered to me, waiting for me--my cousin Laurence. Again, I have no idea whether my mother may have spoken to him about it or whatever. But in any case, I had a particular place to come to. That's why I came to Beverly Hills. That's where his practice was.

YATES: And this was 1957?

BEILENSEN: This is 1957, just after having graduated from law school. I guess it had got into my system that I wanted to strike out on my own, even as I had in some of those previous summers just gone off by myself. I don't know anymore. I mean, to a certain extent one's own family is a

bit confining and controlling, and you want to be away and be able to express yourself or develop in your own independent way. I didn't really know what I wanted to do or be, although by that time I did have some inkling that politics was of interest because I had heard Helen Gahagan Douglas at my second year, perhaps, at law school--I'm not sure what it was--and started thinking in those terms. And I had become involved to a very modest extent in politics back in Massachusetts, and helping out in some of the campaigns, being involved and inspired as many other young people were by the first [Adlai E.] Stevenson campaign for president in 1952. I was not heavily involved in it, just doing some precinct work and helping out in local places.

YATES: So that piqued your interest or whatever the appropriate word is?

BEILENSON: Yeah, so by then. . . . You're forcing me to think about it, which is good. By then I had. . . . Obviously, I was thinking about a possible career in politics without knowing very much about how to go about it or how one might go about it, and wanting to end up in a

BEILENSON: place where there at least was that possibility. I do remember thinking--and I don't remember if this had much at all to do with what I ended up doing or kept me from doing something else--that Westchester [County], especially in those days, was a very Republican area. So if one were interested in elective politics, as I was beginning to be, it probably wasn't a great area to stick around in. There was probably no great future for one who wanted to run as a Democrat for local office or whatever back there, which may or may not have been true. Mt. Vernon may have been a Democratic town, but Westchester was a bedroom Republican community much more so than I think it is now.

Then I had this offer of a job from my cousin Larry, who was renowned as an extremely able, very able lawyer, very special kind of person, difficult at times too, difficult to work for, but nonetheless a very special person. So I came out and accepted his offer of a job here in Beverly Hills. I only stayed with him for about a year and a half. I found it somewhat stifling, somewhat difficult,

somewhat unfriendly. It was not a very friendly little office and I seemed to need that kind of thing. I didn't find it at law school either and I didn't find it in the little bit of practice of law that I did here when I first got here. I went on my own then for maybe six months thereafter doing some pro bono work for some of the federal criminal courts downtown and some other things, and then spent a year working as chief counsel, almost entirely here in Los Angeles, for my predecessor in the state legislature and in Congress, [Thomas M.] Tom Rees, who was then the state assemblyman from our local Westside area, and at that time was chairman of the [California State] Assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance. He hired me to be the chief counsel for that committee. The legislature was in session really only every other year full-time.

YATES: Right, it's a part-time . . .

BEILENSON: In those days it was very much a part-time legislature and his committee had an office downtown at the old state building downtown, which has since been demolished. We worked

there mainly on what turned out to be the Rees-Levering Act. It had to do with the purchase of cars and trying to protect people when they bought automobiles, and looking into the fraudulent sales practices of some automobile dealers throughout the state in those days. So it was kind of fun. We spent about a year or so doing that, went up to Sacramento a very few times to run the hearings up there for Tom or to help him run the hearings, present testimony and so on.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

YATES: Now, you were just talking about working for the assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance, but I wanted to back up a second because. . . . When you were practicing law, you said you were with your cousin for a year and a half, right?

BEILENSEN: Yes.

YATES: And what kind of law was it that you were practicing?

BEILENSEN: Well, it was general practice of the law. It involved a lot of entertainment law because he was chief counsel at the time for Music

Corporation of America. He was closely associated with Jules Stein, who was the founder of it, and. . . . What's his name? Lew [R.] Wasserman. Who is now, I guess, the second in command, who since took it over. So we did a lot of entertainment law in a relatively small office on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. That particular office in subsequent years has turned into quite a large firm of fifty or sixty lawyers. But at the time when I first arrived, there were two partners. Two more partners were acquired from Loeb and Loeb downtown, a big firm downtown, during my year and a half there. And there were two others of us who were also there, who were not partners. So it was a small group at the time, a small firm.

YATES: And then you said you struck out on your own after that?

BEILENSON: Yeah, I opened a. . . . My friend Alan [G.] Sieroty's family owned some properties downtown, including the then Eastern-Columbia Building. He offered me an office down there and I practiced out of this little office of mine, which was rent free. As I recall, I made

very little money. Then within six months or so, as I said, I accepted this job from the then Assemblyman Tom Rees to serve as counsel for his assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance.

YATES: You mentioned doing some work for the federal . . .

BEILENSEN: I did some for the federal criminal indigent defense . . .

YATES: Panel.

BEILENSEN: Board, panel. Whatever it was called at the time.

YATES: OK, because I had a record here that you were working with indigent . . .

BEILENSEN: Indigent. Indigent criminals.

YATES: Indigent Defense Panel of the Federal District Court. So when, roughly, was that?

BEILENSEN: That was during the time that I was on my own, those six months. Having little paid business of my own, I was able to volunteer my time and at the same time acquire a little experience by doing some work for the . . . Which I think was not paid for at all. I'm not sure.

YATES: The work for the federal court?

BEILENSEN: Right. I don't think we were paid anything at

all in those days. I think they earn a modest amount now.

YATES: So that would be roughly '59? Does that sound about right, just for the record?

BEILENSON: It does. Maybe the second half of 1959.

YATES: Now, how did you end up working for the assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance?

BEILENSON: Well, we were all good friends and precinct workers for our local assemblyman, Tom Rees. I helped him in his campaigns in 1958 and 1960, because he ran every two years, as a state assemblyman had to do in those days. I was active in Democratic politics in the local area at that time, in the Beverly Hills Democratic Club, which became the largest CDC--California Democratic Council--club in the entire state of California, which propelled me. . . . Gave me a big leg up on my successful venture to run for public office myself just a couple of years later.

So we were all friends with Tom. And I was a Harvard graduate, a Harvard Law School graduate, and he needed somebody to help him with his committee--at least with some specific work that his committee was doing, as I said,

which turned out to be what was called the Rees-Levering Act--and hired me on for a year or so.

YATES: So you were still in practice by yourself technically?

BEILENSEN: No, not at that same time. This was a full-time job. So I was in practice for myself, if you can call it that, for about six months or so. That's all. It was not a particularly productive or useful time. I learned a little bit, I made a tiny amount of money, but it was nothing which I enjoyed hugely doing, and I guess I was just marking time for the moment at least.

YATES: Well, then I saw something also on some biographical information. I saw that you were working for the State Compensation Insurance Fund.

BEILENSEN: Yes.

YATES: Roughly '60-'62?

BEILENSEN: Yes. Well, '61-'62 I think it was. After spending a year or thereabout working for Tom Rees in the state assembly, I think by then knowing or suspecting or believing that Tom would be running for state senate in the near

BEILENSEN: future, and that I wanted to have a You know, I wanted to have a job, but still be around and available to run for office if the opportunity presented itself. I took a job with the State Compensation Insurance Fund, which was basically a defense fund for workers' compensation claims. Perhaps most of the employers and businesses in the state who were required to insure themselves for injuries suffered by workers on the job were insured through the State Compensation Insurance Fund. It was our job as lawyers for the Fund to defend those cases or to manage cases that were against applicants for workers' compensation or to insure before the workers' compensation judges that the awards were fair and proper and correct.

I did that for about a year and a half, a little bit more. It was good in many ways. I mean, it was a good job and I enjoyed it, and I had good people down there to work for. Like anything else where you do the same thing over and over again, it got a little bit boring and too much of the same thing, but I didn't have to spend an awful lot of time there. It was

only the year and a half, a little bit more. It would be difficult to spend ten years or twenty years there, but in the process, in the course of working there obviously, I learned a lot about workers' compensation law, which stood me in good stead for a particular purpose later on when I was elected to the state legislature. I was the only person in the legislature who knew anything about workers' compensation law, because I was the only one who ever practiced it. So I was able to serve as chairman for a couple of years of a task force that was revamping our workers' compensation laws.

I spent about a year and a half there and then the time came to run for office. Just prior to that time I had to leave the Fund, because I was already declared as a candidate. I'm not sure. The time frame of that is a bit mixed up in my mind. For a short while, two or three months, I worked for what you might describe as a blue collar job, making fenders.

YATES: Really?

BEILENSON: Yeah. A place called Faith Bumper Company on-- was it Melrose [Avenue]? One of those east-

west. . . . Maybe Beverly Boulevard over near Formosa [Avenue] somewhere. I did that for three months. I was getting pretty good at it actually by the time I had to leave.

[Laughter] I was kind of sorry to leave. I was becoming a . . .

YATES: So you couldn't run for office and be working for the State Compensation . . .

BEILENSEN: I think that's the case, but I am not sure anymore.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSEN: Or I thought it was improper. I don't remember. Or I couldn't give full enough time. But still I worked full-time for this Faith Bumper Company. I don't know the answer.

YATES: How did you end up working for Faith Bumper Company?

BEILENSEN: I was just looking for a job. I had to support my family. And since I wasn't working at the State Compensation Insurance Fund I worked there. That was a good job. And as I said, I must have realized from my earlier experience in Alaska and elsewhere that if you're willing to work and you enjoy physical labor, which I do--did then, still do--no reason why you

couldn't be trained to fix bumpers or anything else that people wanted me to do.

YATES: That's a unique talent I think.

BEILENSEN: Yeah, but I was just beginning to develop it when I had to leave it and go to Sacramento as a state legislator.

YATES: Again for clarification, just because I was looking through a number of materials, I noticed the name of the firm Beilenson, Meyer, Rosenfeld, and Susman . . .

BEILENSEN: That was. . . . Yes, when I first came out here and joined my cousin's firm, Laurence Beilenson was the founder and the chief partner in the firm. At that time it was called Beilenson and Meyer.

YATES: OK

BEILENSEN: Rosenfeld and Susman were the two Loeb and Loeb lawyers whom he acquired during my first year there who became full partners with him and [Marvin B.] Mike Meyer. Subsequently, my cousin left that firm some years later-- Laurence Beilenson, the founding member and the one who brought all the original business to them basically. It's now still known as, I think, Meyer, Rosenfeld, and Susman.

YATES: OK. Then I also saw a reference to the offices of Beilenson and Leavy?

BEILENSEN: Yes, that's me. That was later. That was when I was in the state assembly. There was a good friend of mine, Zad . . .

YATES: Is it Leavy? I said Leavy, but . . .

BEILENSEN: Zad Leavy.

YATES: But that was later then.

BEILENSEN: That was when I was in the state assembly.

YATES: OK, I just didn't know . . .

BEILENSEN: We had a law partnership which I really didn't participate in for a few years, and I just left it because I wasn't doing anything anyway.

YATES: Well, let me ask you now about when and how you became politically active. You just said a little bit about it, but in your previous interview you said that you did not really become active in politics until you joined the Beverly Hills Democratic Club in 1957.

BEILENSEN: Well, I became interested in politics as I recall specifically. . . . I was first inspired to think about a career in politics or to think that that would be a useful and good thing to do upon hearing Helen Gahagan Douglas speak at Harvard. I believe it was in early 1951,

BEILENSON: shortly after she lost her senatorial election to Richard [M.] Nixon. A very unpleasant election where she was described by some of Nixon's colleagues as the Pink Lady or whatever because of her left-leaning proclivities, so-called. . . . Allegedly. Anyway, she went around and gave a series of speeches at various campuses either back east or around the country and I happened to hear her. She spoke under the auspices of, I think, the Democratic Club at Harvard, which I was not a member of but I went and heard her. For the first time in my life--at least that was my recollection from those days and since. . . . I had never thought specifically of politics as something that one might be interested in going into or that I would be interested in going into. But I recall, and I think I recall correctly, her speaking about her six years or so in the House of Representatives and her work on behalf largely of the farm workers, the immigrant workers in California, who had totally inadequate working conditions: lack of toilets or places to wash up, inadequate food and inadequate pay, and so on. Many of these

BEILENSON: people came from Arkansas, Oklahoma, elsewhere, seeking. . . . Moving their families out here, I guess, during the dust bowl and subsequent to that time, and how she. . . . What she got great satisfaction out of was being able to help the conditions or improve the conditions under which these people were required to work.

For the first time in my life it occurred to me that politics would be a good thing to go into, especially elected politics, where you would have some ability to get things done because you could make a difference in people's lives. She was my example. I first thought of politics because this woman was there speaking of politics as a means of being able to play a useful role in national or state life in terms of making things better for people, which was a nice introduction to it. I came to it for the right reasons, not because it was just interesting or because it was an ambitious thing--you know, a thing that an ambitious young person would want to do--but because it put you in a position to be able to do good things for people. So I think she was my inspiration for going into politics.

BEILENSON: I was just moderately involved in politics, as I may have said, in Cambridge in those days, both at college and during law school especially. Again, in law school because I did everything I could to not go to class or not spend too much time doing. . . . I played a lot of squash, I went to a lot of movies in Boston, and I got involved in politics to a certain extent. I was active in college--before I got to law school--in what was called the Harvard Liberal Union, which was at that time the local affiliate of the Students for Democratic Action, which was the student affiliate of Americans for Democratic Action, ADA, which was a big liberal group at the time, a big anti-communist liberal group. A couple of springtimes when I was still in college I came down to Washington [D.C] to the annual ADA convention, which was great fun. You hear a lot of interesting people speak. That's where I first heard President [Harry S] Truman speak, which was again something of an inspiration. I was involved back in Cambridge--and I'm mixing up both college and law school years now--in the two Stevenson campaigns. Nineteen fifty

BEILENSEN: two and even more in 1956, even though we were aware. . . . Anybody with any brains at the time understood he was going to be swamped by General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in. . . . President Eisenhower of course. . . . In 1956 there was no chance in the world for him, but I remember that he inspired me along with a lot of other young men and women of my age to be interested in politics, to get involved in politics. We did some local precinct work for him, but I was not heavily involved. But I was involved in the Harvard Liberal Union when I was in my last couple of years in college.

When I came out here to Los Angeles, I was looking for an entrée into local politics and fortunately for me, and for a lot of other people, we had this volunteer club movement which at that time was very large and very active and quite important--it was beginning to lose its importance, we didn't realize it at the time--here in California. Elsewhere in the country if you had gone and you wanted to become involved in politics, you wouldn't have had any obvious place to go to. But here you had a local club you could join. They were all

over the Westside.

YATES: This is the CDC you're talking about?

BEILENSEN: This is the California Democratic Council.

Right. A network of probably a couple of hundred clubs statewide, which played a very important role, especially in 1954, and played a very important role in 1958, just after I got here, in getting [Edmund G.] "Pat" Brown [Sr.] elected governor and Clair Engle elected U.S. senator.

I guess I arrived at the height of its power and its usefulness. In 1957 there was this local club, which one of the woman secretaries in my cousin's law office belonged to and told me about, and I joined it two or three weeks after I arrived in town. That was my entrée into local elective precinct politics and so on where I also met my wife [Dolores M. Beilenson] and made most of my friends that I made early on here in California. Most people joined it for social reasons. It was a good place to meet other men and women, young men and women. It's a shame actually that they don't exist in that form anymore because it was a good place to go and hang out and just make

friends, as well as become involved in politics--most people to a very minor extent and some of us to a more major extent, eventually.

YATES: Let me ask you just to backtrack a little bit . . .

BEILENSON: It gave you a place to go if you were interested in politics, which one doesn't always have.

YATES: Right. You mentioned that in your family politics wasn't part of the regular discussion, but that your parents were moderate Republicans. Is that how you would describe it?

BEILENSON: As I think most upper-middle-class Westchesterites were in those days. I remember their voting. . . . They voted for Mr. [Thomas E.] Dewey I believe, although they voted for Mr. [Franklin D.] Roosevelt one time I think toward the end. I guess a lot of people finally switched and voted for him. I think they supported Mr. Eisenhower over Adlai Stevenson.

YATES: Well, my reason for asking is you obviously became interested in the Democratic party.

BEILENSEN: Yes, and I'm not sure how that happened either. I wasn't rebelling or anything of that sort. I was hardly aware of my parents' politics. In fact, my mother as I recall voted for [John F.] Kennedy over Nixon because she didn't like Mr. Nixon. So obviously their politics was not terribly deep or partisan. I mean, they weren't committed Republicans as such. In fact in those days, even in California, when you had people like Senator [Thomas H.] Kuchel and Earl Warren and so on and [Goodwin J.] Goodie Knight even, when he was governor, Republican politics in the West and in California were relatively moderate too. It makes all the difference.

YATES: There was cross-filing and there was . . .

BEILENSEN: That's right. All the difference in the world. The big change here came when Kuchel lost in the primary to Superintendent of Public Instruction Max [L.] Rafferty.

YATES: Rafferty.

BEILENSEN: They just threw away his seat. The Republicans could have held it forever as long as Kuchel was around.

Anyway, Republicans back in the East then, and even now it's true in the northeast,

Republicanism is different there. It's far more moderate than it is in most other parts of the country. Most of the moderate members of the House of Representatives who are Republicans come from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and other parts of New England. But in those days certainly, and probably throughout the country, most Republicans were relatively moderate, middle-of-the-road kinds of people who were a little bit more conservative than Democrats might be. That's all. But there was no great distinction between them.

My parents' politics were not. . . . I was not terribly aware of that. My being a Democrat or becoming interested in Democratic politics did not seem to me or to them as something which was being antithetical to their beliefs or any kind of rebellion certainly. I'm sure they weren't offended by my identifying myself as a Democrat. I just don't know, but it was not a break from my parents in any way.

YATES: I was just wondering why . . .

BEILENSON: I guess by the time I went off to college and

to law school, the politics of the Democratic party on the whole or the positions on issues were more. . . . I was more comfortable with them than Republican ones. Part of it may have come about during the whole McCarthy time. You know, when that. . . . That offended me and that was driven largely, but not entirely, by Republican anti-communism. I don't know.

YATES: Well, let's come back to the CDC. Some questions just about your involvement in the Beverly Hills Democratic Club, which is. . . . I saw you were chair of the Research and Education Committee one year . . .

BEILENSON: Well, you know, you discover there as you discover anywhere in life, if you're capable and willing to contribute or spend some time or effort on something, you gain some responsibility. So after a year or so there I became chairman of the education and issues. . . . I forget what its name was. You have it there?

YATES: The Research and . . .

BEILENSON: Research and Education Committee, which I think talked about. . . . We met once a month and discussed one issue or another.

YATES: Yeah, I was wondering what that involved.

BEILENSEN: I don't recall an awful lot, but we had a big club, which by the time I was president three or four years later had eleven hundred members. Two hundred or three hundred of them were quite active. We'd have big groups come every month to our meetings and we'd have debates or discussions on one issue or another. It was usually a state issue. State politics were big in those days and particularly interesting. And I became, I think, chairman of the Political Action Committee, which was responsible for getting precinct workers out to do work for Tom Rees and for Adlai Stevenson and whoever else was running in those days. Then within two or three or four years I was elected president.

Fortuitously, a year before the time came that the assembly. . . . Tom Rees's assembly seat opened, so that when that time came in late 1961, early 1962, I was during those two years president of the largest club in the state. We had this endorsing convention locally and each club was entitled to delegates to the convention proportionate to the number

BEILENSON: of paid-up members they had, and we had close to half the paid-up members of all the clubs in the district. There may have been eight or nine or ten clubs in the old Fifty-ninth Assembly District. There were some other sort of large size clubs, but nothing compared to ours. We came in with a bloc of votes, almost all but two or three of which were loyal to myself. I won the. . . . We had a full-fledged endorsing convention with speeches and banners and all that over at the old Ionic Hall down on Robertson [Boulevard] between Olympic [Boulevard] and Pico [Boulevard], I think, on the east side of the street. I don't even know if it's there anymore. I think it is. We had something like 300. It was a little mini-convention. I won 211 to 109 over a fellow named Milton Gordon who was active in one of the Westside clubs at the time--I guess president of it--and who shortly after losing to me in the endorsing convention, through the good offices of his friend Jesse [M.] Unruh, then of course the Speaker of the Assembly, was appointed state real estate commissioner at a salary of something like \$25,000. I eventually

was elected to the state legislature at a salary of \$6,000.

YATES: I was going to say, that sounds high, \$25,000.

BEILENSEN: I think that was what they were paid, state secretaries or state department heads in those days. I don't know.

YATES: Wow. Sounds like a lot for 1962.

BEILENSEN: I think that was what it was. I know it was something like four times what we were getting, which was \$6,000.

YATES: Well, let me ask you. . . . You've talked about being interested in politics and being interested in running for office and the opportunity came up with Rees going to the senate, the state senate, and . . .

BEILENSEN: And my being in a position in the Beverly Hills Democratic Club.

YATES: Yeah. Well, why did you decide to run? Maybe you've answered that, but I'm still wondering why . . .

BEILENSEN: I guess the answer must be that. . . .
Certainly in the back of my mind, perhaps in the middle of my mind, once I came out here and settled in California and found myself in a Democratic district and found myself a member

BEILENSEN: of, and eventually officer and president of, the largest Democratic club. . . . I was someone who was interested in politics and was becoming increasingly so, and never did really catch on with the law. I didn't much love practicing law, although I don't think I gave it much of a chance. Nor do I think I really had. . . . I didn't end up in a place where it was all that agreeable to practice. It was a bit difficult in my cousin's small firm I think. But by then I was interested in running for office. I clearly was interested in running for office by then. The problem with running for office always has been for people and always will be. . . . It's a question of timing and luck: if you're in a place where a person of your party can get elected, or if you're in place where an office opens up so you can run, or that you have a possibility of being selected when that does occur. An awful lot of things fell into place for me. I was just hugely lucky. It's always been obvious to me. I guess it is for everybody if they get elected to office.

I love to encourage young people to want a

life in politics or run for office, but if you just make up your mind that that's what you want to do, probably 95 percent or more of these people are doomed to lead a very disappointing life if they really settle on that, because no matter how capable you are or bright you are or good you are that doesn't necessarily lead to. . . . I mean, if you're bright and good and you wanted to become a good lawyer, you go to law school and become a good lawyer or a good doctor or whatever else, or a good teacher. That's all quite possible, but getting elected to office is a very chancy thing. As I said, you've got to be in the right party in the right place at the right time. It all ended up fine for me and for some other people obviously, but it doesn't for an awful lot of other people.

YATES: Right. So when Rees decided not to run . . .

BEILENSON: But even before that, clearly I was thinking. . . . I knew that he would be running for state senate or for something else one of these days and I didn't know what the timing would be at the outset, but by then I was heavily involved in politics locally. I was

BEILENSON: interested in politics, I was involved the only way you could be involved here in California, which fortunately. . . . These days you don't have a way to be involved in California. There are no clubs worth their name. So it just all turned out very fortuitously.

Not that I didn't have to work for it. I had to win the endorsing convention, which we did handily enough. Then we had to win the primary, which we did relatively handily. I think about fifteen thousand to ten thousand votes over the next person,¹ mainly because I was the club-endorsed candidate and we had a couple of hundred people doing precinct work for us, which I'm sure must have made the difference. I mean, no one had ever heard of me before in the area really, except a couple of hundred of my friends, and nobody had heard of the other guys who were running either. We beat a local lawyer named Joe Orloff and there was another fellow named Winston, Frank [M.] Winston, who was involved who came in third.

1. The vote was 15,294 to 9,783.

I'm not sure what he did. None of us was well known. In fact, Orloff was better known than I. At least he lived around the area for twenty or thirty years or whatever and I was new to the area. I had just been here four, four and a half years.

YATES: Before talking some more about the campaign, describe for me the history of the district that you were running for. It's the Fifty-ninth Assembly District.

BEILENSON: I don't know a huge amount about the district other than that shortly before I arrived, it became a fairly secure Democratic district. My predecessor Tom Rees was first elected, I think, in 1952 or '54--I'm not sure--under the strangest circumstances, where he started off running as the Democratic candidate against a person [Charles W. Lyon] who at that time was the Republican speaker of the state assembly,¹ and who during the course of the campaign was either indicted or put in jail. Tom still

1. Charles W. Lyon was Speaker of the Assembly from 1943 to 1946.

would not have defeated him apparently, I am told, except for the fact that the Republican party, being embarrassed about their incumbent candidate being in jail, ran another Republican who split the Republican vote and our friend Tom Rees won by a very small margin. I think he was reelected by an even smaller margin two years later. That may have been '54 or '56. I'm not sure.

YATES: Right, we can check up on that.

BEILENSON: It was very, very close. I don't know what happened thereafter. There must have been a reapportionment somewhere in the middle which made it a more Democratic district, because by 1958 when I was here and he was running again for reelection--I don't remember now how long he was in the state assembly--it was a fairly secure Democratic district. He had no trouble, as I recall, winning in 1958. The big problems then were getting Pat Brown elected governor and statewide candidates and Clair Engle, U.S. senator, and so on, which we were successful statewide in doing. By the time I ran in 1952 . . .

YATES: 'Sixty-two.

BEILENSEN: Excuse me. Nineteen sixty-two, when the reapportionment subsequent to the recent census had again occurred. But I'm of the opinion, I'm of the belief, that somehow during the fifties our Fifty-ninth Assembly District. . . . Maybe just because Tom was there he made it a safe district as the incumbent. I don't know. It went from becoming a relatively safe Republican district to becoming a relatively safe Democratic district. In any case, when I first ran in 1962 after the 1961 reapportionment it was a fairly secure Democratic district. And once one won the Democratic primary in 1962, as I did over these two chaps, one was not guaranteed, but it was likely, that one would be elected in the November general election.

YATES: What were the other aspects of the district? I'm thinking ethnic makeup, the demographics of the area.

BEILENSEN: Well, it extended. . . . It was relatively small in area. It included about a quarter of a million people, which sounds awfully small, but I think that was the size of the assembly districts then. I think Beverly Hills formed

more or less the eastern boundary, maybe a little bit of. . . . Maybe it extended beyond Beverly Hills. It went west all the way to the coast. It did not include Santa Monica, as I recall, but included Venice and much of the Westside. I think it did not include much of Westwood, but it included Mar Vista and Rancho Park and Beverlywood. The Beverlywood area, as I recall, was the biggest voting area and the most strongly Democratic area, which is also where my principal opponent Joe Orloff lived and where, I guess, he did fairly well. That's why he did as well as he did over all. But it was in makeup almost entirely white except for a few black people, mainly at the western edges, obviously quite affluent, not particularly Jewish, although Beverlywood was heavily Jewish. The rest of it, I think, was non-Jewish. Nobody even knew I was Jewish anyway because my name wasn't Jewish. It didn't sound Jewish. Neither Tony nor. . . . My first name Tony, nor my wife's first name Dolores even. . . .

YATES: Nobody focused on that at that point?

BEILENSEN: No. I don't think so. It became a big thing

four years later in 1966 running for the state senate in a heavily Jewish district, or parts of which were heavily Jewish and had a very heavy Jewish vote. But I don't think people much thought about that or knew anything about that at the . . .

YATES: In 1962.

BEILENSON: In 1962. And I think probably Joe Orloff was Jewish and maybe Frank Winston was. I have no idea. They probably sounded more Jewish than I and it may well be that they did as well as they did, even though they had much less in the way of help than I did, because I did not sound Jewish and they did. I don't know. I have no way of knowing.

YATES: Let me ask you one more question and maybe we can stop for today. You mentioned the name Tom Rees. He was the assemblyman for the area and was running for the state senate and obviously you knew him well. I'm just wondering if you could summarize what kind of an assemblyman he was for the area. I'm thinking more maybe you can contrast what you developed as your style versus his.

BEILENSON: I'm not sure I can. . . . I don't know how I

can necessarily contrast us. I did then and still do like him very much. I hold him in the highest regard. He's a very bright, very independent-minded person who was, I believe, an effective and very special state legislator. Both his years in the state assembly and then his years in the state senate, where he, as you know, for a short while before he went off to Congress. . . . It wasn't that short a while was it? Anyway . . .

YATES: I'd have to look at the dates. I can't remember.

BEILENSON: Before he went up to Congress he represented all of Los Angeles County. There were then something like 7 million people in the county and we had one state senator for the entire county before the 1966--or '65 or '66--one man, one vote, so-called, decision of the Warren Supreme Court. I've always thought well of him. He was a very principled person, a very honest person, a different kind of person from many. He was a very tall guy. He believed strongly in the grassroots politics that all of us had grown up with. It was obviously responsible for his having been elected in the

BEILENSON: first place, especially in the first couple of elections when he had such a terribly difficult time when he wasn't even expected to win. He was a believer in the club movement, very supportive of them, which was not true of course of most elected officials. There was a real antipathy between many elected officials, local elected officials in the state legislature especially, and the local Democratic clubs. They were often at each other's. . . . They were often fighting with one another because the club movement, which generally tended to be a little bit more idealistic I suppose, if one could generalize, than elected public officials. They were often fielding their own candidates in elections for the state legislature. Here we were very lucky. The CDC was basically the mainstream grassroots representative of a portion of Democratic politics on the Westside, and some other areas of California as well. Up north especially and some other places around here, I think. The clubs were always close to elected officials. Elected officials were elected largely because of the clubs, and we tended to

BEILENSON: stay close to them.

Anyway, Tom Rees was, as I think I was, an effective and a good state legislator, but someone who remained close to his roots, as it were, and to the club people that got him elected in the first place. I mean we're different in personalities. Everybody is. But I never had anything but the greatest respect and affection for him. He was an excellent state legislator. He was a very good congressman, quit after ten years or so I think out of frustration, as many people did and continue to because it's much harder to feel that one's doing anything of value back there than it is here, where you can see the difference that you make. That was especially true when he was in Washington twenty-some years ago, when advancement was very slow and the seniority system really kept you from doing very much. So I don't think he had so happy a time in Washington as he did in Sacramento, but he was an excellent member of the state legislature. A very independent-minded person, which among other things, I think, helped teach me that one could be independent-minded and

still survive and do fine. You know, stand up to your own party leadership up there when necessary, to your own governor when necessary, and you didn't lose anything by doing that.

YATES: OK, great. I just wanted to get sort of an idea where things were at in 1962.

BEILENSEN: In fact we're going to be seeing him again in November where the Former Members of Congress. . . . This is a group which we all belong to, has meetings every now and then, an annual meeting in Washington. They're having him and Leon [E.] Panetta and a former congressman from Vermont, Peter Smith, who is now the president of the university up in Monterey, the newly formed one.

YATES: Oh, you mean CSU [California State University] Monterey Bay?

BEILENSEN: I guess it is.

YATES: It's part of the Cal[ifornia] state system. It's at Fort Ord.

BEILENSEN: I think so. The old Fort Ord or something. They are hosting this meeting, and so we're coming out in November for three or four days before we come down here to be with Tom, and he owns a little vineyard up there, a five-acre

vineyard.

YATES: Well, that sounds nice.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Session 2, September 3, 1997]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

YATES: Good morning again.

BEILENSON: Good morning again.

YATES: What I thought we could do is pick up where we left off during the last session. You were discussing the Fifty-ninth Assembly District when you ran for office in 1962. I wanted to talk to you about the campaign. You discussed receiving the CDC endorsement and winning the primary. Tell me how you went about campaigning leading up to the general election.

BEILENSON: I remember relatively little about those times. One thing, however, was certain or sure. That is that the primary was by far the more important of the two elections that year. It was a relatively safe Democratic district, not that we took anything for granted. Of course it was the first time I had ever run for anything. And as we may have discussed, I had the help of a lot of the club people during the

BEILENSON: course of the campaign and especially in the primary. I think having had the help of a couple of hundred people doing precinct work at one time or another, not always of course that many at a particular time, probably made the difference in the sense that none of the candidates. . . . None of the three of us was terribly well known to any great number of people in the area. Once one won a primary in that era, and in a district such as that, the chances were awfully good that one would go on to win in the general election.

I have no specific recollection of what we did in the general election other than to continue the kind of precinct work we'd done earlier. Both that year and in subsequent years, at least through my times in the state legislature, both my wife and I did a lot of door-to-door campaigning, knocking on doors and leaving little brochures for people who answered the door, or leaving little messages that we'd been there if people did not, in fact, answer their doors. We did a modest amount of mailing of brochures. Probably no more than one or two. Perhaps not more than

one. The reason I say that is because, as we may have discussed last time, I don't recall, my recollection is that we spent a total. . . . We raised and spent a total of \$20,000 that year for the entire election cycle. We must have spent something like \$12,000 in the primary and \$8,000 in the general. Most of the money in both cases went for postage and printing of brochures, and I suppose for these little throwaway. . . . I think they were called one-sheets, but I don't. . . . That's not right. Whatever.

YATES: Like a sheet of paper?

BEILENSON: A little sheet of perhaps three by eleven inches or something that used to be printed by a printer downtown named Aldine's, where everybody had their little. . . . Sort of on glossy paper. It was printed in blue, I think, with a white background with a picture of me or my family. Me on one side and my family and I on the other side, and we'd distribute them from door-to-door and so on. So it was a relatively. . . . Compared to what goes on these days, it was a very modest campaign, and one in which fortunately we at least were able

to depend on the help of a lot of club members and friends who went door-to-door with us often.

YATES: Besides the mailings and the walking--and I'm thinking of you and your wife--how else did you get to know constituents?

BEILENSON: I don't think we did in any other way. I really don't think we did. One of the--I was going to say anomalies, but I think it must be true all over and probably even then to a certain extent--one of the characteristics of running for office if the constituency is relatively large is that only a tiny fraction of your potential constituents ever come in contact with you, ever have seen you, ever have heard you speak. . . . That's even true now these days in congressional races, unless you're in some area up in the Central Valley or perhaps somewhere like that where the congressman, the state senator, or the state assemblyman may well get a lot of publicity in the local newspaper and appear on television every time they're home from Sacramento or from Washington [D.C.]. That's simply not the case, of course, here in Los Angeles. So that even

in these later years, but it was certainly true then, other than the two thousand, three thousand, or four thousand people I may have come in contact with by knocking on their doors, nobody had ever seen me or heard me. They heard of me only through the one or two mailings they may have received. I won in November because there were a good many more registered Democrats in the district than there were Republicans. I won in the primary because we together--the club people and our family-- had physically gotten to a good many more people than the other candidates.

YATES: What about issues? What issues did you focus on for that campaign?

BEILENSON: I have no recollection at all of the issues, although a quick look at one of our brochures, which we've got copies of around, would probably tell us. But . . .

YATES: But nothing stands out to you that was a big issue?

BEILENSON: No, nothing at all stands out. No, there was no big issue, I'm sure, certainly between the candidates.

YATES: OK. I noticed from reading some biographical

material that you worked on a number of campaigns prior to your running for office. I was wondering how that experience helped you in your own campaign?

BEILENSON: Well, it helped us to this extent, that we were not totally babes in the woods. We'd had some experience as you suggested. I had a very modest amount of experience back east helping out in the Stevenson. . . . Was it by then? No, excuse me. 'Fifty-two and '56. OK.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSON: So both of those were before it. OK. I'd been involved to a very modest extent back in Cambridge in helping out in the presidential campaigns of both 1952 and 1956. So I had some idea, some understanding of what a campaign involved and what one does in a local headquarters. We'd been involved in 1958 and 1960 in our local campaigns here, mainly for Tom Rees but also I guess . . .

YATES: Yeah, I noticed there was . . .

BEILENSON: In 1958 we were involved as local headquarters for the statewide campaigns. So in any case, running a campaign, or knowing what went on in local campaign headquarters or the kind of work

BEILENSON: that needed to be done, was by then quite second nature to us and we had no trouble at all picking up on it. It was a very simple procedure in those days. It was sending out precinct workers and working out precinct lists, preparing these handouts that we had printed down at Aldine's and writing the text, and overseeing the printing of the brochures that were to be mailed out to the relevant constituencies. You know, in the primary, of course, you mail only to Democrats. In the general election you mail to Democrats and Republicans and you sometimes vary your piece a little bit, depending on who they're going to be sent to. It was a very primitive kind of campaigning compared to what people do now. You didn't really need to have a lot of experience to be able to do it well, but it was something which we'd been involved in for several years even here in California, and it was a very easy thing for us to do. We also, of course, had a lot of friends in the various clubs who themselves had been involved in campaigns, some for many years longer than we had, and were able to lend us their experience.

YATES: You mentioned how much money approximately you raised for that election. How did you raise funds?

BEILENSEN: I don't remember very much. I remember only one thing. I remember that of the \$20,000, \$4,000 came from the club of which I was president, the Beverly Hills Democratic Club. I don't remember if it came in the primary or in the general election. That left, what, \$16,000. I'm sure that a few of those remaining thousands came from the other clubs. They couldn't raise so much money as the Beverly Hills club could, but I would guess that \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 of this \$20,000 came from. . . . It's strange talking about such tiny amounts compared to what we spend these days . . .

YATES: Later I'd like to talk about other campaigns.

BEILENSEN: No, no. Of course. I was just thinking back. . . . We raised \$10,000 or \$12,000 just from individual people in small amounts. I had great difficulty in doing that. I've always had a certain amount of difficulty. Most candidates do. But I did particularly because I didn't know any "grown-ups" as it were. In

BEILENSON: quotes. I hadn't grown up here. So I didn't have any family friends, did not have any parents or friends of my parents, or other older grown-up people who may have been successful in life and had a little money from whom I could ask. The only friends I had out here were the club members and a small handful of other people. And I do not have. . . . Not having looked, since that time, at our list of contributors, I can only imagine that we raised money in very small amounts. Probably never more than \$100 per person and usually much less, just from everybody we knew. It's not a lot of money, but you can raise the additional \$10,000 or \$20,000 that we needed to make it to round out the \$20,000 in small amounts. What we've learned since, of course, is that if you need a lot of money for a campaign, even though you'd like to raise it in lots of small amounts of \$25 and \$50 and so on, that does not begin to add up to what you need. But it did in those days. We had no large contributor, for example. I think probably there were no limits on what you could accept from people back then. I'm not sure, but I'm sure there were no large

contributions. Probably none even. . . .

Probably no \$500 contributions.

YATES: Even. OK.

BEILENSEN: Probably \$250 was the largest contribution.

YATES: OK. What did you like about campaigning at that point?

BEILENSEN: I liked it all right. I liked the walking. I liked going door-to-door. I felt good about seeing people and having them see me because in those days just as much as now, maybe. . . . Just as much as now I guess, the vast preponderance of voters never did get to meet the people they voted for. So at least. . . . I mean, it wasn't a very good chance to get to know us very well . . .

[Interruption]

YATES: OK, go ahead.

BEILENSEN: What I did enjoy was the feeling that at least three thousand, four thousand--whatever number it may have been--of these people had some personal connection with me. They'd met me, albeit briefly, when I came to their door, shook their hands, and said a few words to them, and handed them my brochure. At least they saw it was a respectable young man who was

well-spoken enough and who perhaps. . . . They would have some memory of me later on if in fact I were to be elected as a representative. And in fact that's true. All through my years, especially in the state legislature, I would run into people back home often who would say that I had come by their door back in my early campaigns and . . .

YATES: And they remembered that.

BEILENSEN: And they remembered. Now, one of the reasons why they remembered was--I totally forgot to mention this but this is an important little point--was that as we went around, my wife and I, we gave out a little cookbook to the people who answered their door with a little insert printed inside which said, "Vote for Anthony C. Beilenson for State Assembly--Democrat." We had them again in the general election. We just took off the "Democrat" so we could give it to Republicans as well. Now, these were books which were published by my mother at the Peter Pauper Press, who sent me huge quantities of them. I must have given away three or four thousand.

YATES: Wow, that's a lot.

BEILENSEN: Right. They were little books that sold for one dollar at the time--retailed for one dollar. So people remembered me mainly because of the cookbook. There are women still-- especially down in the Beverlywood area, where we did most of the walking, since that was the most heavily Democratic area with the most potential voters--who still have the cookbook and still remember me because of it. I mean, it's a real book. You know, hardcover book, and it's nothing that anyone's going to throw away, unlike some other junk that sometimes people pass out when they're running for election. So that large numbers of people, aging people, people older than I sometimes by twenty or thirty years, if they're still around, still have their little Peter Pauper Press books with my name pasted in it.

YATES: That's quite a technique. Technique's not the right word, but unusual . . .

BEILENSEN: No, it was very nice. It may well now be illegal. You know, giving something of value. I do not know.

YATES: Oh really?

BEILENSEN: I don't know.

YATES: You mean, versus a bumper sticker or a pin?

BEILENSON: Yeah. Although in those days. . . . First of all, it was not against the law then obviously. Secondly, its value, although the retail sale was a dollar, the press would sell them to bookstores for forty cents or fifty cents apiece. So I don't really know the answer, whether one could actually do that these days or not. But in any case the books would cost an awful lot more now than they did then. But since it was a family business and these were all extras that weren't being sold anyway, my mom was happy to send them to me.

YATES: What did you like the least about campaigning?

BEILENSON: Raising money, although I had no real. . . . To be truthful, I don't recall much about it at that time. We obviously didn't do an awful lot of it. Knowing me, knowing myself well, I must have hated it as much then as I have ever since.

YATES: Right. So you carried this through your campaigns in general . . .

BEILENSON: Almost all candidates do. Almost all public officials do. There are some, but very few, who don't mind it. Some who even sort of enjoy

it. It's almost a sport with them. But it's an awful thing to have to do.

YATES: Yeah. Anything else that you disliked?

BEILENSEN: Not that I recall, because there was almost nothing else involved in the campaign. I mean, there were no debates that I recall. There were. . . .

YATES: Your opponent at that point, that was Peter Smith, right?

BEILENSEN: Peter Smith, a very decent man.

YATES: The two of you didn't meet or . . .

BEILENSEN: I don't recall having met with him, which is not the case two years later. But I don't think so.

YATES: For a forum or something . . .

BEILENSEN: No, I don't think anybody was interested. Unless it was. . . . No. I think the answer is no. Although I knew him slightly or got to know him slightly, I think it was after the election.

YATES: But you said at that point, after the primary and then leading up to the general election, that it was not a real difficult campaign.

BEILENSEN: No. I mean, we worked as hard as we possibly could. It was the first time we had run and

all that, and you don't take things for granted. But among other things it meant that--although in those days things were done differently anyway--but among other things it meant that my opponent was not getting an awful lot of support from. . . . You know, he was just putting on a very modest campaign too, so that it clearly didn't seem too much of a threat to us. We continued to go door-to-door and work real hard and do our little mailings and so on, but it's nothing like some other more difficult campaigns we've been in.

YATES: OK. Well, when you won the 1962 election . . .

BEILENSEN: Then I had to go to Sacramento.

YATES: Right. California, of course, at that time had a part-time legislature and I was wondering, what were your plans for being in Sacramento to serve?

BEILENSEN: I'm trying to remember how much time we spent up there in those days. I guess. . . . We moved up to Sacramento. I think the first year was the year of the general legislative session and the second year was the budget year.

YATES: Yeah. 'Sixty-three and '65 were the general . . .

BEILENSEN: Right. Anyway, we moved up in a little U-Haul, which we hauled behind one of our little cars up to Sacramento and got an apartment there for the first couple of months of the session out in North Sacramento. Then my wife and our then two young children [Peter L. and Dayna A. Beilenson] came home, because we were very pregnant with our third child-to-be [Adam L. Beilenson]. My wife was very pregnant. He arrived in March and the remainder of that session . . .

YATES: This is 1963.

BEILENSEN: 'Sixty-three.

YATES: March of '63.

BEILENSEN: Right. For the remainder of that session, they remained here at our little home up in Coldwater Canyon just north of Beverly Hills. I drove up and down every week with two colleagues of mine from the state legislature-- [Charles] Charlie Warren and George [E.] Danielson. They both represented, kind of, mid-Wilshire and downtown. One represented downtown, one represented. . . . Charlie Warren represented a mid-Wilshire district, sort of Crenshaw-area district. They would meet and

drive up in one car, pick me up, up in Coldwater Canyon on Sunday evenings right after supper or so, and then the three of us would drive up to Sacramento that night, and then on Thursday afternoons we'd all drive back down home.

YATES: Wow, so that was every week.

BEILENSEN: Every week. It was a lot of driving of course. It was about four hundred miles each way. Interstate 5 hadn't been built, although that would have been further west anyway much of the way, but we drove up and down [U.S.] Route 99, which was not a freeway, lots of cross streets and so on. We drove too fast and it was really a bit dangerous, looking back on it. We did not have an adequate amount of money. We were only making. . . . I think our salary was \$500 a month, so we couldn't afford airplanes, which in those days were particularly expensive because that's before PSA [Pacific Southwest Airlines] came in and with a little competition drove the prices down.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: So most of the time, almost every weekend, we drove up and down while we were in session.

- YATES: What were your plans for your law practice at that point?
- BEILENSEN: I was never very serious I think, looking back, about practicing law, and at that point I guess I got myself involved in a partnership with Zad Leavy, with whom I was a partner in name only. We were and remain good friends, although I don't see much of him anymore. He moved away fifteen, twenty years ago up to Big Sur. I had an office to come to, but I did almost no legal work from then on.
- YATES: OK, so you were subsisting on your salary from this.
- BEILENSEN: Yes. Basically, yes. We also at the time--I guess it's still true of course in the state legislature--had the use of a car. They rented a car for you, paid the gas, the cost, which in those days for both was relatively modest. Now of course it's worth a good deal. And we had a modest per diem. I don't recall how much it was. Twenty dollars a day or so at that time perhaps when we were in session. In any case, we. . . . Yes, we lived on our salary and our per diem.
- YATES: Now, tell me about your impressions when you

first arrived in Sacramento as a freshman assemblyman.

BEILENSON: Again, we're talking about something that was thirty-five years ago. It was a time when being in politics, certainly in the state legislature, was a good deal different, I suspect, than it is now. It's a relatively small legislature, not compared to all other states of course. I mean, there are eighty people in the state assembly, and only forty in the senate, which is quite different. But it was small enough so that in a very short time you got to meet and know virtually all of the other members. It was almost like a great big class. It was almost like going to school in some respects. And again, being so long ago, I don't recall an awful lot about my early impressions other than my. . . .

I sort of committed myself, within my own mind, to work hard and to be a good state assemblyman and to represent the people back home. Not only those who voted for me, but also those who voted for my opponent, whose feelings about a lot of issues might be somewhat different from my own. So the only

BEILENSON: recollection I really have is that this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a legislator and I wanted to work hard at it and do a good job at it. And I did work hard at it. I mean, every legislature is similar. There are a handful of members who are intelligent and hardworking and really buckle down and do the work that a legislator ought to do, and an awful lot of them who are there just for the ride or because it was fun running for office or they have ambitions or whatever. Or they're probably decent people and so on, but they don't work awfully hard at their job whatever it might be, and in this case being a legislator.

There's no way ever that the people back home will know, or almost no way, what kind of a legislator you are. There are a lot of different facets of your life and of your job as a representative. The only one that most people back home see--to the extent that anybody back home sees it at all--is when you're back home and you're campaigning and you're talking to them and you're glad-handing. You're moving around the district, and so on,

and you and your office are being responsive or not to their needs or their inquiries, or whatever. That's all they see. They don't know what kind of a legislator you are. And the problem has always been, I've noticed, in both houses of the state legislature and in Congress that we don't. . . . We never have quite enough--especially now, it was less true back then I think--enough legislators, men and women both, who worked hard at their job at the capitol, whether it was in Sacramento or in Washington. You know, carried as much of the load as they should. Because there's a lot of work to be done, and unless the members take it seriously and responsibly and work hard at it, it's not going to be done properly.

YATES: So regardless of whether it was the part-time legislature when you were in the assembly or the full-time legislature later, that's what struck you about it? There's always some people who . . .

BEILENSON: Well, it's one of many things that struck me about it. There are always just a relatively few of us. . . . As I said, a few handfuls of us who did most of the real work, and who,

fortunately in those days at least, were generally rewarded by being given some responsibility and authority because people who were running the place needed the help of members who would do the work. That was especially true in the assembly and it was especially true under Speaker Jesse Unruh, who was then the speaker of course and who was bright enough. . . . He was a very bright person in any case, but was also smart enough to know that the place would run well only if he had good people doing the work, helping him do the work of the place. That's one of the reasons he rewarded me and a couple of other relative newcomers two years after we first got there by putting us on the Ways and Means Committee, which was a fairly early promotion to that prestigious committee.

YATES: OK. I want to come back to some of your committee assignments, but let me ask you, what kind of orientation did you receive when you first arrived there?

BEILENSON: I don't recall any at all.

YATES: OK. So you just arrived and went to work.

BEILENSON: I think so. But again, it was like joining a

group, joining a class, joining a fraternity almost perhaps, although I've never been in a fraternity. But it wasn't so big and complex a place that you needed an awful lot of help or a lot of orientation. You just got involved just by dint of being there in the day-to-day life of the legislature. You were given some committee assignments and you served on those committees and if you cared at all you learned about the jurisdiction and the areas of. . . . I'm totally inarticulate today.

YATES: No, no. You're doing fine.

[Interruption]

OK. I was asking about what kind of orientation you received. And one reason I had mentioned it was that I know in 1966, people have said that if you were in the assembly, you received some kind of orientation that year where they traveled up and down the state. So I was wondering if you had received anything?

BEILENSON: I have no recollection of any kind of orientation whatsoever. I know we didn't have anything like that. In fact, it surprises me to hear that there was such a trip for newly elected members of the state assembly in 1966

since I don't recall having heard a thing about it. But no, we didn't have that.

YATES: And actually it was. . . . I mean, they were elected in '66. It would have been '67, technically.

BEILENSEN: Sure. No, I understand. But I was up there still of course as a new member of the state senate and we were all good friends with one another and with people in the other house and I'm surprised that I don't recall having heard about it. But as I was also saying, it's always useful, obviously, to have an orientation for any job or new situation in which one finds oneself. But looking back, it wasn't all that necessary I suppose in many respects. We were thrown into a group of eighty people. Not all that large. You asked for and were assigned to three or four different committees and by dint of attending your committee hearings you very quickly picked up a decent amount of information about what it was that you were supposed to be working on and legislating in the area of. There were always, of course, a good many senior members around who had a certain amount of experience and who

were chairman or whatever of the committees which you served.

You picked up very quickly if you were interested and cared about what was going on. You didn't need an awful lot of orientation. You were immediately part of a group of people who were each individually and all told elected to help run the affairs of the state. There was no problem at all understanding your role and fulfilling it quite quickly.

YATES: Who did you start to gravitate toward in particular in the assembly?

BEILENSON: Again, I hate hearing myself say this so often, but not having thought about it in so long and its being now almost thirty-five years ago, I don't remember an awful lot except this. Well, two things now that you started me thinking. The first, and this has remained true all through my life in the state senate and later in Congress, and I'm sure it's true for everybody who gets elected to office, you tend to become closest friends with and remain closest to your classmates. That is, people who were elected at the same time you were, who are sharing this experience of first becoming a

BEILENSON: member of the state legislature in this case, or first becoming a member of the Congress in later years. They tend to be people more your age, certainly people with your experience, your level of experience or lack thereof. And you have something in common obviously. You're new to the place. So that was true for me then there as it has been true for me in later instances.

It was also a small enough place where. . . . We all knew each other quite well. I don't recall what the number of Democrats to the number of Republicans may have been at the time, but it was probably like forty-eight to thirty-two, or something in that area. There were only forty-seven other Democrats for example. One of them was the speaker. One of them was the majority leader. We were all good friends with one another. I became good friends with Jesse Unruh, became good friends with [Jerome R.] Jerry Waldie and [Robert W.] Bob Crown, who was close to the speaker and who also was chairman of the [Elections and] Reapportionment Committee, or at least became chairman of it. I mean, we were all. . . .

With the exception always of a small number of people in either or both parties who were not terribly friendly or not terribly interested-- there always were some such people--all the rest of us were pretty good friends. And it also crossed party lines, especially in those days.

YATES: OK. I wanted to ask you about the role partisanship played.

BEILENSON: It was not terribly partisan for a number of reasons. It's developed that way now in state legislatures and in Congress since that time for reasons we can go into later perhaps, not all of which I'm sure I understand. But at that time, both there in Sacramento and I believe as well in Washington, there was much less partisanship than there is now or has been in subsequent years. I recall in Sacramento that even though we had a Democratic speaker most of the time I was there, that there were always a handful at least of Republican chairmen of committees. The speaker would appoint them of course because the speaker had complete power to appoint chairmen and committee membership. . . . Membership to

committee of each of the members and also to assign bills to particular committees. But we always had five, six, seven, as I recall, Republican chairmen of committees. I suppose both to bolster the speaker's position and have some Republicans indebted to him.

But for whatever the reason, it ended up being very valuable for all of us because there were obviously very capable people on the other side of the aisle, in this case Republicans, and it was good that we were able to make use of them. One of the great tragedies in the Congress to me has always been that when we as Democrats were in charge, we could never make adequate use of some of our Republican colleagues who clearly were more competent in a good many instances than some of the Democratic senior members. But anyway, so there was very little partisanship and we all knew each other and . . .

YATES: Why do you think it was less partisan then?

BEILENSON: I'm not sure. Partly because that had always been the tradition. I don't know why it was the tradition, but obviously it's a good tradition. It's a nice tradition. One which

BEILENSEN: I've always been very much more comfortable with than the way things subsequently developed. Both because I don't. . . . I'm speaking for myself, but I think many of my colleagues feel the same way. Most legislators are less politically partisan than their partisan friends back home. For example, the local members of the Democratic party or the Republican party or the Republican or Democratic clubs, they tend to be people who feel strongly their allegiance to the Democratic party or to the Republican party, at least they did in those days. You go up there and you're just dealing with other human beings, almost all at that time men, who are all elected because they cared about their state and wanted to do a good job. Those whom you found valuable and sensible and bright and nice, you were happy to work with and it didn't make the slightest difference to you what their politics were.

It was also true in those days, I think it's fair to say, that most members of both parties were far closer in ideology to each other than they are now. And here I'm saying

BEILENSON: something which some people may argue with, but it's particularly true of Republicans. In those days Republicans tended to be kind of middle-of-the-road moderates. I mean, they were Kuchel people or Earl Warren-type people or Eisenhower-type people or Governor Dewey-type people. They were a little more conservative than Democrats were, but we were all kind of in the middle. We were all middle-of-the-road kind of people.

As, especially, Republican politics in California and almost everywhere else in the country have developed since, with some exceptions in the northeast still, Republican office holders have tended to become more and more conservative, more and more ideological. As that occurs, it obviously makes it far more difficult for them and their Democratic colleagues to work with one another because their feelings about issues are often radically different. Whereas in those days, the Republican leadership there--[William T.] Bill Bagley, [Robert T.] Bob Monagan, [John G.] Jack Veneman are some of the main people who pop into mind, [Houston I.] Hugh Flournoy--they

were the same as we were. They were Republicans. They were a little more conservative than we, but were very much on the same wavelength basically and we had a close good working relationship. It was much better that way than the way it is now.

YATES: It strikes me as a little bit surprising, just because the Democrats had not been in the majority for very long. Basically '58, right? And so it surprises me a little bit . . .

BEILENSON: Is that true of the legislature as well as state office?

YATES: Well, maybe I'd have to check that. I've got the figures.

BEILENSON: I'm not sure. I just don't recall.

YATES: But in general, I'm wondering if the Democrats would be worried about losing that majority at that point. But it doesn't sound like Jesse Unruh was necessarily . . .

BEILENSON: No, Unruh was . . .

YATES: Worried in that way.

BEILENSON: Unruh was a much better person than the public probably ever gave him credit for. First of all, he was very bright; and second, he cared a lot about things; and thirdly, he was a very

BEILENSON: smart politician, which is always good, I think, because you can have good people in charge and if they're not good politicians they don't stay in charge long enough, which is what happened unfortunately over in the senate side just a few years later. He was more partisan in some respects than some other people, but you also have a certain responsibility if you're the leader of your party to look out for your party's interests. Not only to keep yourself in power, but to keep your own party in power. From the outside, voters probably always thought of Mr. Unruh as someone who was partisan and a little perhaps heavy-handed at times. And at times he tended to be, as any leader tends to be, thinks he has to be every now and then to keep people in line. The truth of the matter is that he did care about things deeply. He was a good legislator prior to becoming the speaker. He was close friends and worked well with a good many of our moderate Republican colleagues, as we all did.

So anyway, getting back to your original question, we were all thrown together, this relatively small group of almost entirely men,

BEILENSON: I guess, at the time. And those of us who worked hard and cared about one another, and so on, found one another and it was not at all difficult to do.

One other thought occurs to me--perhaps I'll throw it in now--when you asked about partisanship and how it's developed. I suspect strongly, I guess it must be true, that in more recent times when politicking has involved the raising of a lot more money, that that tends to make things more competitive and therefore a little bit more partisan. I mean, who ever you are up there, you're going to come from a relatively safe district. Your opponent will have run a fairly expensive, probably fairly nasty campaign against you--in recent years--and you start feeling a little embittered probably toward the other side. And in fact, the job of the speaker or any legislative leader in the last fifteen, twenty years has become among other things unfortunately. . . . Part of his job is to help raise money and dole out money to colleagues of his who are running unfortunately sometimes against incumbent Republican friends of his. So it starts to

create some partisanship and some acrimonies and bitterness amongst people, whereas in the old days everybody would have left everybody else alone. You went back home, you ran in your district, you usually won easily enough. And meanwhile, of course, your Democratic friends who are serving with you in Sacramento were not involved in the campaign against you, whereas later on the speaker was raising money for the guy who ran against you.

I think that must have contributed to the growing partisanship up there as it has probably back in Washington.

YATES: Even though at that point, my understanding is that Unruh was not favorable towards the CDC. I'm just thinking about what you're saying about endorsing and money and . . .

BEILENSEN: Yes, you're quite right. I was only thinking and talking out loud just now about interparty strife.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSEN: Republicans and Democrats. Yes, it's quite true that Unruh and a good many of the other elected Democratic officials up there were quite wary about the so-called volunteer club

BEILENSON: movement. As a matter of fact, Unruh's position on most issues was as liberal, if that's the correct adjective, as was CDC's.

They didn't get along all that well together, although there were some club people who did more than some others. But to a certain extent, the CDC people saw themselves and were seen by others as outsiders who were encroaching a bit on the bailiwick of elected public officials. So once you were an elected official you tended to keep your distance from the clubs, but it's also true that in most instances you got yourself elected without very much help from the clubs. In my case and the case of some of my colleagues, we had a lot of help from them. We remained very close to them.

I just soon discovered that there was no problem at all working closely and becoming good close friends with Jesse Unruh. I think he looked at me with a little wariness when I first arrived because he knew I was a product of the club movement, but I think he soon found that that didn't affect my relationship with him, and I was just someone who tried to do

what was right and voted the way I wanted to anyway, which more often than not by far was the same as he felt about things. And he too, wanting to do an effective job as speaker, was more than willing to give responsibility and decent committee assignments to any of the members who wanted to do some work. There weren't all that many of us at any particular time upon whom he could rely.

YATES: I want to ask you some more in general relating to Unruh, but before we do that, what do you remember about how you set up your office? I'm thinking both at the state legislature and in your district.

BEILENSON: We had very little in the way of support staff at that time. As I recall we had one person in the district, and shortly after getting elected or perhaps just before taking office, I hired a young man who since served as and is now retired as a vice-chancellor of UCLA. A fellow named Alan [F.] Charles.

YATES: Oh sure. I know the name.

BEILENSON: Who has, of course, remained a close friend of mine all our lives here together. So he was my district office person and remained here in the

district as I recall. We were, I think, when we first went to Sacramento, given one of the relatively small offices up there in the capitol building and a secretary. I think that's all we had.

YATES: So would you share a secretary with someone?

BEILENSEN: No. No, I think by that time we had our own secretary and our own little office. The only thing I do remember is that my secretary was paid more than I.

YATES: Oh really?

BEILENSEN: I think she got \$600 a month and we were limited by the constitution to \$500 a month.

YATES: Now, was she technically your secretary for the whole year full-time or . . .

BEILENSEN: I guess she must have been. I'm sure her job was a full-time job. I guess she must. . . . I know by then we each had our own individual little office in the capitol building, so that even when we were not there she must have been there in the office. I'm sure she was. We probably didn't have an awful lot of stuff to talk about when I was back down in the district and in the downtimes when we were not in session. But of course that changed very

quickly too. We soon became a far more full-time legislature.

YATES: So your support staff changed?

BEILENSON: Well, I don't recall our support staff having changed its size frankly. When I got to the state senate a few years later and I think our pay went up to \$16,000 or something of that sort, I recall still having just one person in the district office and perhaps that one person still in Sacramento. I don't recall that we got any more staff in Sacramento until we became, or unless we became, committee chairmen. I may be wrong about that and I'm sure it's grown since. But we had. . . . Our staff was tiny at the time, but it was adequate. For example, in recent years in the Congress we've had large staffs, but a huge fraction of their time, maybe 80 percent of all the time and energy of the staff now, goes into responding, in a sense, to constituent problems, requests, and mail, and phone calls. We had very, very little of that at the time. I mean, we were basically left alone by the people back home and the amount of staff we had was adequate. Otherwise, I guess we probably

would have had a larger staff. But we were better staffed apparently by then, by the time I arrived, than most other state legislatures.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

YATES: OK. Now, back to Jesse Unruh, you talked a little bit about what he was like. And what was your impression of him under assembly leadership? How was he as an assembly leader?

BEILENSON: Of course I had no one to compare him to. But looking back, if I may just for a moment, from my position now, I should think that he was by far the best--in every respect, in a sense, including most effective--legislative leader under whom I've ever served. As I said, it's a relatively small group up there, even in the state assembly. Not so small, of course, as the senate. But in the senate the power is diffused a little bit, diffused amongst various members of the leadership and the Rules Committee and the president pro tem, whereas the speaker, of course, had absolute power. Still does, I guess, if he has a large enough majority in the state assembly. As someone basically from the outside, someone from the

BEILENSON: club movement, someone who was young and idealistic, I think it's fair to say that if I had found him overbearing or unfair or anything of that sort I would have remembered it very strongly. I would have felt it very strongly. I never felt that way. I felt welcomed by him.

As I said a moment or two ago, I think he first looked upon me and few of my other newly arrived colleagues with a certain amount of wariness because we'd come out of the club movement or he didn't know us personally and all that. But he very quickly picked up on. . . . Probably co-opted people to a certain extent. You know, obviously you're flattered if the speaker befriends you or speaks well of you or makes some use of you. But in any case, he made good use of people. He was a strong and an effective leader in a way which offends some people I suppose. It certainly offended some people then and certainly some outsiders, but which I've come to believe the longer I've served in legislatures is a very necessary ingredient of a good leader. We've not had strong enough good leadership in my opinion from the Speaker of the House of

Representatives, for example, in most of the years that I was there.

YATES: I think you just probably listed some of the qualities that made him so effective. But why do you think he was so good at being a leader?

BEILENSON: Because he was bright. Because he was a bright person. And some people are born politicians or have a sense of what it requires, or what's necessary to get along with people, be a good leader, and so on. It's hard to describe, but there are such people. There are a lot of people who get to positions of leadership who don't know how to use it awfully well. He did. At the same time, as well as being good at it he also was, I think, on the whole very fair, very good in terms of the outcomes of the various things that he tried to do. He made use of me very quickly because. . . . I'm almost positive that my very first. . . . Among my committee assignments my first term there was the Committee on Finance and Insurance. That's the committee for which I had served as chief counsel under Tom Rees two years earlier.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: Two or three years earlier. So I could claim

BEILENSON: some experience there and I believe that was one of the three or four committees that I was assigned to my first term. First of all, the speaker could afford. . . . Let me back up. That was one of the committees, which even in those days, when not an awful lot of lobbyist pressure was applied. . . . Very little campaign funding, compared to now, came from lobbyists. It was one of those committees that was preferred by a lot of people who liked to maintain close relations with lobbyists because all of the financial institutions, whether they were banks or savings and loans or insurance companies, were all regulated in effect or they all came under the jurisdiction of that committee. And it was usually chaired by and largely filled by members who had close ties or developed close ties with one or more of those various interests. So having one, sort of, independent liberal non-affiliated person on there didn't hurt the speaker's control of the committee. He could afford to put me on, give me something that I wanted, something where I'd had a little bit of experience as chief counsel a few years earlier, and still not lose control

of the committee even if he couldn't count on my vote.

But what he also did was to take advantage of the fact that I was the only member of the state legislature at the time who knew anything at all about workers' compensation laws because I practiced for a year and a half. He made me chairman of a little task force [Workmen's Compensation Study Commission]. I forgot what the reasons were that they were in the process then or felt it was necessary to revamp the workers' compensation laws in California. There was a big bipartisan effort with some labor people and some business people kind of shepherding it and watching it closely to do just that. So he appointed me as chairman of this task force. There were three Democratic members, two Republican members. We spent much of the next couple of years trying to revise the workers' compensation laws. We had a number of hearings. We went once, I remember, up to Toronto.

YATES: Oh really?

BEILENSON: Yeah. It was the only time I've ever traveled really, certainly out of state, as a member of

the state legislature that I recall, to see what the Canadians were doing, because they were doing some interesting things. We spent a day up there, or two days. It was a very interesting situation for the speaker and for me because we had this three to two Democratic majority, and the labor people who were close to Unruh obviously were watching closely what the task force was doing, and the business people had their people assigned. We all became very close friends, traveled around a bit together. But what nobody had expected, and I hadn't even thought about at the time, was, because I had served for a year and a half or more as counsel basically for an insurance company, for the State Compensation Insurance Fund, my experience was very much tilted toward the business, the employer's point of view.

YATES: Versus labor.

BEILENSON: Versus labor. Right. Versus the applicants, the injured applicants' point of view. Not that I wasn't sympathetic, but that I'd had enough experience with the real world of workers' compensation, which no one else had any of at all, to know that not all workers

were really so badly hurt as they claimed and that, for reasons I won't go into right now, the system didn't work awfully well, I thought. I ended up voting with the two Republicans very often, which became something of an embarrassment for the speaker because he was kind of indebted to his friends in the labor movement. Although he didn't mind an awful lot--I mean, he knew I was trying to do the right thing--he had to keep explaining away to the labor unions why this task force, which he had appointed, was not always coming out with the right point of view from their point of view.

YATES: Did he ever put pressure on you?

BEILENSON: No, he was fine about it, but what he did very nicely at the end of the second year was he just told me about his problems, his political problems with his friends in the labor movement, with me. They were all fond of me too, and they knew perfectly well, I think, that I was basically right, and they knew that the system was a bit of a rip-off and so on. But they were under pressure from their own people and the labor attorneys for applicants

and so on. Whatever. I don't mean to make a big thing of it. But he asked if I would mind relinquishing that job and perhaps in return for that, perhaps not, he put me on the Ways and Means Committee, which I was happy to be on. But it was kind of funny in a sense that I. . . . None of us got into trouble. I didn't get in trouble with him, he didn't get in any real trouble with his friends in the labor movement, but he solved the problem by removing me from that little task force, and put on a more dependable Democrat.

YATES: Well, as long as we're talking about committees let me ask you too. . . . I know for '63, your first year in the legislature, you were named a member of a newly created committee, the Joint Legislative Committee for the Revision of the California Penal Code. What do you remember about that?

BEILENSEN: Not a thing.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSEN: I think that. . . . Do you have my list of committees there by any chance?

YATES: Yeah. Well, this is one I actually drew up that I culled from this legislative handbook,

so hopefully it's accurate.

BEILENSON: OK. Right. Here's what I did in 1963. I was on the Criminal Procedure Committee. I was vice chairman of that. Vice chairman didn't mean anything. It was just a title you could give to somebody. You could . . .

YATES: But you would fill in, wouldn't you, if the chair wasn't there?

BEILENSON: Yeah. Yeah. But he was there usually. You put it on your stationery, you go home, and you can say, "I'm vice chairman of such and such." That's always been true. And in most respects, I think, we usually made the senior Republicans vice chairmen of the committees. But whatever. It's not important.

YATES: So you mean you'd have a Democrat as the chair and then perhaps a Republican . . .

BEILENSON: In any case, it's of no . . . The fact that people were vice chairmen of one thing or another is of no significance whatsoever. So I was on the Criminal Procedure Committee actually for both terms in the state assembly. I was on the Finance and Insurance Committee as I just said, on Livestock and Dairies [Committee], which I knew very little about,

although it was fun. I mean, these things were all fun. You learned about stuff you never heard of or never knew about at all. And Municipal and County Government [Committee], which I found boring. And yes, in 1963 I apparently was named member of the newly created ten-man Joint Legislative Committee for Revision of the California Penal Code. I take it that was, in effect, part of our work from the Criminal Procedure Committee, and I suspect that most of the members of the Joint Committee for Revision came. . . . The assembly members, at least, came from that. But I have very little recollection of that. Sorry.

YATES: OK. And just for the record, you're reading from something that I typed up.

BEILENSON: Yes, you're right. I have no memory of this. [Laughter] Thank God. The only thing I remember, in fact. . . . It comes back to me now. If you hadn't jogged my memory, I would have remembered only being on the Criminal Procedure Committee and Finance and Insurance and chair of the Subcommittee on Workers' Compensation. It's only now that I remember being on Municipal and County Government, and

Livestock and Dairies. And by 1965, I see, I remained on the first two, Criminal Procedure and Finance and Insurance, and went on Ways and Means, as I just said, and on Natural Resources, Planning, and Public Works [Committee]. So I dropped the other two committees that I wasn't all that interested in.

YATES: Let me back up a second about your committee assignments. You've talked about some that obviously you were interested in or had some experience. I'm thinking Finance and Insurance, for example. But how did you receive your committee assignments?

BEILENSON: Well, in the state assembly then and I believe now, the assignment of committees was entirely within the jurisdiction of the speaker, which along with his picking chairmen and assigning bills to various committees, especially when you had a choice between this committee and the other committee, is what gave him his great clout.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: If you didn't get along with the speaker he could drop you from the committee that you

BEILENSEN: wanted to be on. If he gave you some decent committee assignments, hopefully from his point of view at least, you owed him a certain amount of loyalty because he did something good for you. And so you repaid him by supporting his leadership position, and his own remaining as speaker, and also every now and then when he needed your vote for one thing or another, presumably, he could count on you for that, although that was understood and nobody was ever very ham-handed or very obvious about that as far as I can recall. But it may have been that I was pretty much a party loyalist and never felt it anyway, and he never felt the necessity of calling on me or asking me specifically. I'm sure there were some other members who were more difficult or obstreperous or far more conservative, let's say, than the mainstream Democrats, whom the speaker probably had to go speak to and ask every now and then for help on something. But anyway, you indicated to the speaker what committees you would like to be on. It was in his own interest to make you as happy as possible. He always. . . . If possible. If he possibly

could. And obviously he had to give first choice to senior members who were already there and who wanted to retain their seats. So he gave you one or two committees you really wanted to be on and then filled in on other things where . . .

YATES: He needed people?

BEILENSON: They needed to fill it up and you weren't particularly interested. But as I said, if you were a bright person or an interested person, even these other things tended for a while at least to be of interest to you, even if they weren't something that you really wanted to spend your life working on when you got up there. I mean, Livestock and Dairies was fun because it just exposed you to all kinds of farm problems and things you'd never heard ever, or thought about, or knew about before. I enjoyed it, although when I had a chance to get on Natural Resources and Ways and Means I took that opportunity the next term.

YATES: Let me ask you. . . . Again back to Unruh. I'm sorry we're jumping around a little bit. You were just a little while back saying that he was an effective leader, and I'm wondering how

effective was he in working with Governor Brown, do you think?

BEILENSON: Well, I've got to tell you that not being a member of the leadership and being newly arrived on the scene. . . . On a scene wherein he and the governor had had four years of relationships of one sort or another--I guess they'd known each other going back prior to that time. . . . I was largely unaware of--not entirely--but largely unaware of and certainly not involved in any of these relationships between the speaker and his leadership and the governor on the other hand. On the other hand, it's also true that their relationship every now and then, when it tended to become difficult or a little less than tranquil, became a matter of public note. So obviously we were aware of it. I was never. . . . I wasn't a member of the leadership and so I never went in with him to talk to the governor and so on. But I was aware of their problems, and he would come back often and among all of us. . . . I mean, many of us were good friends of his even though we weren't members of the leadership, and he'd grumble about the

BEILENSON: governor's position on this or that, or his unwillingness to talk to him about this, or his unwillingness to move on that.

I recall that my sympathies, although one would have expected otherwise. . . . Despite the fact that I was very fond personally of the governor, as virtually everybody was--a lovely man--I tended to be supportive of the speaker's position. I tended to believe that his position often made more sense than the governor's, that the governor was being unduly difficult or inflexible or impolitic. All I'm really saying is that I tended to agree with the judgment of Mr. Unruh on political matters of various kinds or on issues of various kinds to the extent that I was aware of the fact that every now and then he had some difficulties with or differences with the governor. I recall, partly because I was just much closer to him personally, usually being supportive of his own point of view. Yes. And agreeing that he was correct about this and wishing the governor were a little more sensible about something or other. Although on the other hand there were. . . . I can't identify them right

now off hand. There were a few instances where I also agreed with the governor.

YATES: OK. Let me ask you too then about what was the relationship between the senate and the assembly at that point?

BEILENSON: I don't really know. I think in general, as it has been and as it was in Congress in the later years, the assembly and the senate were two really quite different groups. They worked differently. The senate was even more bipartisan then than the assembly was, even though the assembly was relatively bipartisan then compared to what it is now certainly. But they were very separate domains and they were very jealous, probably still are, of their own individuality and the fact that over there in the senate they did what they wanted to do and we did what we wanted to do, and eventually we had to agree on something and that was often difficult.

In a sense we operated as quite different houses. . . . I mean, quite different institutions. Now, part of the reason for that was that the senate was more conservative in those days, I think it's fair to say at least

BEILENSON: my first few years there, than was the assembly. It was more bipartisan so that the leadership over there in the senate was more reliant, I think, on Republican support to stay in power than was Mr. Unruh on our side. So they had some partisan pressures to remain more moderate or more conservative perhaps--if those are the right words, they aren't always--than the assembly. Certainly when I was in the assembly, the assembly was far more urban oriented than the senate, which at that time, still prior to the one-man one-vote ruling, was very much a [rural]-oriented place, full of very capable. . . . Many old-time legislators, both Republicans and Democrats, who were very impressive people, but who represented much less populated areas than the assembly did, which was based on population.

But I don't. . . . Again, for the very few years I was in the state assembly, not being a part of the leadership, I don't recall very much about how Mr. Unruh, for example, and Hugh [M.] Burns over in the senate got along together. I know they respected each other. I know they worked well enough together. Again,

both of them were sensible politicians, Unruh a particularly bright one. Unruh was particularly bright and he did what was necessary to get along with them. And to the extend each house could let the other do what it wanted, everybody was happy. Every now and then, obviously, on some budget matters or some bills obviously you had to address the differences between the two sides, positions on things. You worked it out. You always were able to. There were some bills--I don't recall them now--that Unruh was pushing and that the Democrats over in the assembly wanted, which had a very difficult time getting out of the senate.

YATES: Sure. Well some of that obviously is just a natural process, I think.

BEILENSON: It changed. It changed when the senate changed, when we all went to the senate in 1967 to a great extent, even though they retained individual, quite different characteristics.

YATES: But because of reapportionment the dynamics changed.

BEILENSON: Sure. The same proportion of senators then were coming from Los Angeles County and from

the other big urban districts as was true in the state assembly, so at least some of our basic interests were similar then, which was not the case prior to 1967.

YATES: On a more personal note, once you were there either in the beginning or. . . . I don't know, this may have evolved during the time you were in the assembly. What were your objectives?

BEILENSON: I don't know. That's going to look silly, I suppose, if you put it down on the printed page, but I was at that time. . . . I had by that time resolved on, if possible, at least some part of my life as a legislator. I was just really happy having been elected and being in a position where I could contribute to what certainly was then, and certainly became thereafter even more so, the premier state legislature in the country. Everybody acknowledged us as such. And that was my work, that was my job. I didn't think beyond that. I was very happy doing that work, being in that job, and serving on my committees, and carrying legislation and so on.

It was even more true in the senate when I had more of a chance to do some of that. But

it was a time of. . . . It was great fun for all of us. It was simply fun being in politics. It was fun being part of a legislature. That's not quite the right word. It was enjoyable. It was a friendly milieu. You're in with a group of other fellows who are there mostly for the same reasons you are, many of whom are bright and nice, and almost by definition you could say succeeded in getting themselves voted for and elected. And it was good fun being part of such a group of people and working with them toward. . . . Having some say in creating the laws of the state in which you lived. Nothing more or less than that.

YATES:

I guess one reason I asked the question is that from looking at materials,¹ you obviously began early on to carry legislation. A fair amount of it. I know you just said that in the senate it probably expanded. But not everybody carries a lot of legislation. Most people carry some, and you seemed to gravitate towards

1. Anthony C. Beilenson Papers, 1963-1997, #391, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

carrying what I would call maybe consumer protection.

BEILENSON: You're quite right. I did.

YATES: I'm wondering why you did that?

BEILENSON: I don't know. It's a perfectly good question. I wish I had a better answer for you.

I've always wondered in my mind why my politics turned out the way they did, why I ended up being a Democrat rather than a Republican, or why my sympathies toward this group or toward this issue or against another issue developed. Somehow, I guess, it's in one's background or one's genes. I really don't know. I don't recall very much at all why I gravitated towards certain issues, as you suggest.

I carried a lot of early consumer protection legislation, although we weren't successful with much of it until I got over to the senate later on. Some of the bigger bills. . . . I don't know why. I think maybe I was just trying to, again, be of use. You look around and there's certain areas. . . . The old areas, or traditional jurisdictions or areas of interest, were already co-opted by people who

were there, and there were some new developing issues such as consumer protection, which was in its very early stages and it was something which was appealing to a young liberal assemblyman like myself and some others. . . . I introduced some bills. I don't recall specifically at all why I did that. I had some fairly early--but not quite at the very beginning--environmental-related legislation. Then of course, the abortion bill [Therapeutic Abortion Act],¹ and there were a couple of other things.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSEN: Which is a separate matter.

YATES: I mentioned consumer protection, but there were different areas that you were interested in.

BEILENSEN: I was interested in being an active legislator, and one way to do that of course is to carry legislation. It was fun, it was interesting. You felt like you were doing something of use. I think I had a much more activist point of view as to what a legislature should do and

1. S.B. 462, 1967 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 327.

what a legislator should do in those days than I perhaps have now. But it was also a kind of heady time. Not quite so much as perhaps the years just before we arrived. It's interesting. We were there for Governor Brown's second four years, which for him certainly were far more difficult than the first four years. They had just done the water plan and some of the state university planning and . . .

YATES: Education and . . .

BEILENSEN: Yeah, a whole series of really wonderful big things that really needed to be done. And they undertook them successfully, got them started, so we were kind of on the downhill, I think, from that. I think the governor didn't have an awful lot on his plate at that time. I think. I'm not sure. So one had to look around for other things, and being an activist sort of . . . I mean, as somebody who is interested in doing things, I got involved in a few areas and a few issues where there wasn't anybody there already. It seemed to me I could contribute by suggesting these kinds of legislation.

YATES: Something just occurred to me when you were talking about. . . . Maybe it was when you said legislature versus a legislator and carrying bills. I'm wondering, how did you find the process of trying to carry legislation through at that point?

BEILENSON: Well, that's an interesting question and it's worth talking about at greater length than we ought to bother with here I suppose, but you're free of course to introduce any bill you want. Interestingly, and I never. . . . Until I got to Congress I never realized any of this, but we had an awfully easy time, as it were, being bill authors in--easy is the wrong word; I'm trying to think of what a better word would be--in the state legislature than in the Congress. If you introduce a bill in the state legislature, the chances as I recall of its being given a hearing were excellent. I mean, you could get a hearing on almost any bill you introduced. It was assigned to such and such a committee and you would ask the chairman, "Could you please set the bill for hearing sometime?" And you'd agree on a date, that each committee would meet once a week or twice

a week, whatever it might be. You got a hearing on almost any bill you wanted, almost anytime you wanted, as long as you didn't wait too long in the session. Although even then, people often waited till the end when it was crowded. People weren't paying that much attention and there were enormous numbers of bills being heard the last week or two that bills could be heard in committees before the cutoff date came, whatever that might be.

So you could then in those days--I assume it's the same now, I don't know--introduce almost any bill on almost any subject and have a hearing on that bill. You might not have a very big hearing, you might not be able to bring a lot of witnesses or whatever, depending on the bill and its importance. At the very least, you could testify on its behalf and perhaps have a couple of witnesses testify too. When you get to Congress later on you find out that's not true. You introduce five thousand bills and you're lucky if you have a hearing on one of them. You just don't get hearings.

YATES:

So this was your experience in both the assembly and the state senate over time?

BEILENSON: Yes. I guess it was everyone's experience, certainly at that time. There were small houses, you knew everybody in them virtually, and you could get a hearing on whatever bill. Now, it was true that you might have more success in Congress with a bill that's before a committee in which you're a member, or certainly before a committee in which you're chairman. But in Sacramento you can introduce a bill on any subject and go over to that committee and present it. You'd be talking to a group of men, and later some women, all of whom were friends of yours and who knew you and maybe respected you. Maybe liked you, maybe not, depending on your relationship with them and your reputation and so on. Those of us who had good reputations, it obviously helped us get our bills out. There were years in which some of us got a lot of bills out. Twenty or thirty bills or whatever, which is sort of unheard of back in Washington. I forgot what the original question was. [Laughter]

YATES: I was asking you about how you found the process, especially maybe as a new. . . . I was thinking, as a new legislator.

BEILENSON: Well, you pick up on that very quickly. You go to a few committee hearings and you see how it's done. You see what other people do. You realize, "You know, I've got a couple of good ideas for bills," and you've introduced them or you're about to introduce them. You learn very quickly, by watching and listening and being there, how it's handled. If you're an intelligent person you can do it just as well yourself or almost as well yourself. It's not a tricky thing to do. It's not difficult to do, although some people obviously were better at it than others. And as I said, once you developed a reputation for being a thoughtful or a fair-minded person, someone who is careful of what he was doing and proposing, the mere fact that. . . . There was a certain number of members, myself I think eventually included, whose bills were treated more kindly by their colleagues than others because you just trusted the author and knew that he, or later she, had done a thorough and a thoughtful job in putting it together.

YATES: You were in the state legislature from. . . . You were elected in '62 and then you ran for

the state senate in '66, but in the middle there you had another campaign.

BEILENSEN: Yes.

YATES: How did that campaign compare with your '62. . . . This would be '64, excuse me. How did that compare with your '62 campaign?

BEILENSEN: It was quite a different campaign and a far more interesting one in some respects. I mean, here, unlike the first campaign, there were some issues involved. The principal one was the abortion issue because in 1963 I had, for reasons we can talk about a little later perhaps, introduced this proposed Therapeutic Abortion Act. And my Republican opponent in 1964 campaigned against me on that particular issue, at least amongst groups or within areas where he thought it would be effective.

YATES: And this is David [L.] DeLoach. Is that how you pronounce it?

BEILENSEN: David DeLoach. And we had two or three. . . . I only remember one specifically, but I'm quite sure we had two or three public debates or meetings. They were usually, in those days, at property owners groups. We had property owners groups, associations, back then even as they

still do. And one of the few useful purposes they serve is to be a forum for candidates in election years. So I remember that we debated a couple of times or at least had joint appearances a couple of times. I have very clear. . . . There was another one too. Was this the Rumford Fair Housing year too?

YATES: I believe that it is. I should know.

BEILENSON: I'm sorry. There's no reason why you would know that.

YATES: Well, hold on. Let me double-check my dates.

BEILENSON: I'm almost sure. It had to have been.

YATES: I have it passed in '63.

BEILENSON: It passed in '63. The Rumford . . .

YATES: Fair Housing Act.

BEILENSON: OK, well let me talk very briefly about three issues, if I may. I was running for reelection in the same district obviously that I had been elected in before. It was a strongly Democratic leaning district, a relatively safe district I think. We certainly discovered thereafter that it was. But there were two or three large issues, unlike the 1962 election, which played some role or might have played some role in it. One of them was abortion.

BEILENSEN: And among other things my opponent David DeLoach and the Republican party campaigned outside of Catholic churches on Sundays especially registering voters and reminding them that I was the author of this proposed Therapeutic Abortion Act, this proposed liberalization of the abortion laws in California. And in fact, he sent out just prior to the general election, the last week of October, beginning of November, probably the one piece of campaign material that I remember most vividly in all the many years that I ran for office, which was a folded brochure with one fold in it. On the outside it had "Abortion or Murder" in red letters. Or in black letters on white with red drops of blood dripping off it, or purported to be drops of blood. And then you open it up inside and it said, "Most voters in California are lucky enough to have someone representing them in the state capitol, in Sacramento, who believes in the flag and motherhood and other good things, but not so the people of the Fifty-ninth Assembly District, who have as their assemblyman someone who is advocating the

murder of unborn children." So it was a direct attack on me for having introduced our abortion liberalization law.

One of the other things that he sent out that year, brochures, had on the outside "Mr. Smut."

YATES: That was the other thing I remember from looking at the materials. There was something about pornography as an issue.

BEILENSON: Right. These are both things that anybody's going to open up. "Abortion or Murder" or "Mr. Smut." You open it up and it said something to the effect that most people in the state of California are lucky enough to have represent them in Sacramento somebody who wants to protect everyone's children from pornographers, or something, but not so the assemblyman in this district, who, when asked why he voted against a bill to crack down on pornography, said, "I don't care. My children can't read. . . ." Or a bill to protect children from having access to pornographic materials said, "I don't care. My children don't read." Well, that was, unfortunately, fairly true.

[Laughter]

YATES: Well, they were young enough at that point. Is that the point?

BEILENSEN: Exactly. Yeah, this all came unfortunately from one of these public meetings at this property owners association over in the west side of town, west side of our district, where, annoyed with him when he was asking me about this particular bill that I voted against, for obviously civil liberties purposes. . . . In those days they were talking about banning Playboy magazine and things of that sort, not the really awful stuff that's made its appearance since then. He said, "Well, don't you want to protect your own children from this kind of stuff?" And I foolishly, a wiseacre response, said, "Well, I don't care. My children can't read." Well, that's because one child was then just over a year and a half old and the other one was about two months old, and they couldn't read. I obviously shouldn't have said that, but it was thrown right back at me in this brochure.

So anyway, that was the second issue. Then the third issue was the Rumford Civil Rights Act.

YATES: And what did . . .

BEILENSEN: Fair Housing Act. Sorry.

YATES: What did he do?

BEILENSEN: What he did then was far more effective than what he did in either of the other two issues. He sent out in a few areas of the district something that purported to come from someone else, like "concerned homeowners." Again, I'm just reaching because I don't. . . . I've got copies of it around somewhere, but. . . . Who said, "We have been asked. . . ." Totally fallacious. "We've been asked by Assemblyman Anthony Beilenson to send out this letter to people in this community to ascertain whether there are any apartments or homes available for rent or sale to Negroes because we're trying to. . . . He is helping us in our effort to try to integrate this area."

YATES: Now, you just said he sent this out?

BEILENSEN: He had it sent out. I mean, it didn't have his name on it. It had some fictitious name like Fair Housing Committee or something like that. But the Republicans and DeLoach were involved in. . . . I mean, they did it. People getting this responded immediately saying, "What are

you trying to do?" Our district office was flooded with calls, with maybe a few hundred calls. I could tell that this was an issue that had. . . . We were upset about it and panic is too strong a word, but we were really concerned about this. This came out like three or four days before the election and we were getting a very negative response from people who believed this nonsense that these folks had sent out.

YATES: So how did you counteract these issues?

BEILENSON: So we counteracted it, or tried to, by calling the governor's office and asking, "Could we prepare a letter, purportedly from Governor Pat Brown, denying all this and saying that it was the truth that I had nothing to do with this, that it was a fictitious political thing that was made up, and there was no such effort, and there was no such committee, and all that." And while they were hemming and hawing, we prepared the letter and sent it out.

YATES: Yeah, because you said it came out a few days. . . . What he had done came out right before the election.

BEILENSON: Right, so we had to send out a letter to the

BEILENSEN: areas where we knew his letter had hit, had reached, which is only a portion of the community fortunately, because we had to send it out first class so it would get there by Monday, you know, before the election. We sent it out over that weekend and it was delivered mostly on Monday and some on Tuesday, a letter purportedly from Governor Brown saying, "This is to tell you that this recent purported, so-called letter from the Committee on Fair Housing was a fake. It was a political fraud and there is no such committee and your assemblyman, Tony Beilenson, who is a good friend of mine, has done a good job in Sacramento these past couple of years, was not involved in it. There is no such plan to move Negro people into your area or anything of that sort."

So we sent this letter out, which I'm sure helped quiet down some people who might otherwise have been upset by it. It's amazing what people believe. They'll believe anything that you send them. Anyway, the long and the short of all this is, this fair housing thing was a limited thing. It was only in a few

areas of the district, I think, as I recall.

YATES: They received the mailing?

BEILENSON: Right. But the pornography and the abortion, especially, were district-wide issues where he had sent out the mailings all over. That year I got more votes than any other Democratic or Republican candidate for the state assembly in Los Angeles County. I think there were thirty-some districts and sixty-four people. Sixty-four candidates. I had the highest vote total and I got. . . . I won by a sizable number of more votes, ten thousand or fifteen thousand, than I had two years earlier, which was good for the abortion bill because I went back up to Sacramento and I said to my colleagues. . . . I said, "I've discovered a great issue. In fact, I've discovered two great issues. You support abortion for the women and you oppose pornography for the men and that's an unbeatable combination." And to a certain extent that was true. It was certainly true about the abortion bill. I was trying to be a little funny about the pornography thing.

There's this great untapped reservoir of feeling about abortion being allowed. It

should be allowed certainly under certain circumstances. And when you start asking people how they feel about it the response was very, very positive. The fact that I had been reelected more strongly than any of my colleagues from the entire county because of this particular issue largely, I think--I certainly presented it that way to my colleagues--helped strengthen our efforts to get the abortion bill through.

YATES: Well, so if I understand you, then even though he sent out these materials about abortion . . .

BEILENSEN: Pornography and fair housing.

YATES: Yeah. I'm thinking specifically the abortion and pornography issues. Then that was not necessarily. . . . It didn't turn into a negative against you.

BEILENSEN: I think just the opposite.

YATES: Because I was going to ask you how you dealt with that.

BEILENSEN: I think we ignored them. We certainly ignored the pornography one. I took a position on a couple of bills that was not probably approved of or understood by a lot of people, and therefore I didn't bother. . . . I'm not going

BEILENSON: to prolong the debate. You don't keep raising an issue if you're on perhaps the losing side of it. Although I don't think it was in this district particularly a bad issue, but I just didn't follow up on it. I made no bones about the fact. Everybody knew and I'm sure I had in my literature about trying to moderate, trying to liberalize, the existing abortion laws in California. That was the single big issue in the campaign. Again, somewhat irrelevant to the extent that if there had been no issues I would have been reelected handily. I do think--I did then and I do now--that that contributed to my larger winning margin. In fact, I know there are Republican or were certainly. . . . There were Republican women especially in the district who, from then on, were supportive of me because of the abortion bill. I mean that was a huge political plus for me. It was something I didn't realize at all at the time. I thought quite the opposite when I first introduced the bill the year before. But it turned out that supporting the liberalization of the abortion laws was a very strong political . . .

YATES: So you were hearing from constituents? They supported it?

BEILENSON: Yeah, but it continued for the rest of my life. Republican women have come up to me all my life and said, "I've been voting for you ever since you introduced that abortion bill, ever since you changed the abortion laws" or whatever. In those days at least, and even now really, but in those days particularly it was a totally nonpartisan issue.

Even in those days I guess the most. . . . Of course, I was representing a fairly affluent slice of the state, although parts of our district weren't all that affluent at all. But parts of it were upper-middle-class, and so on. So the likelihood of their being supportive of liberalization of abortion laws was very high. And in those days especially, most of the largest contributors to and most of the intimate supporters of Planned Parenthood were often moderate Republican women. For whatever reason, my position on that general issue, family planning and at that time abortion, obviously endeared myself to a lot of Republican women who voted for me because of

it.

YATES: You'd been in the assembly from '63 through '66. And when did you decide to run for the state senate?

BEILENSON: As soon as all these. . . . We all decided to run for the state. . . . In 1965 or 1966, the Warren Supreme Court¹ handed down its one man, one vote decision, and the state senate districts were all reapportioned sometime. . . . I guess in 1966 sometime. All of a sudden in Los Angeles County instead of there being one state senate district there were thirteen or fourteen. And thirteen or fourteen of us Los Angeles assemblymen, who had a step up. . . . In those days, as I recall, most senate districts were made up almost exactly of the two assembly districts. They were all contiguous or. . . . Not contiguous, but contained, basically, two assembly districts because there were forty of one and eighty of the other so-called around the state, so they fit. Obviously, any of us who were already in

1. The year was 1962.

the state assembly had been elected in half of one of these state senate districts and we had the upper hand in getting elected.

YATES: But why did you want to be in the state senate?

BEILENSEN: Because it's the thing. . . . It was a step up. Everybody was going to the senate and. . . . I don't know. We all ran for the senate. I don't know why we did. I guess it sounded better to be in the state senate than the state assembly. But in any case, I guess whenever you have a chance to run for what seemed to be a higher office and your chances of getting there were really quite decent, you did so. By that time, of course, our predecessor in Los Angeles, which only affected me because he lived in our particular district, Tom Rees, who represented the entire county, had just moved on to Congress.

YATES: Now, if I have my information correct, the Twenty-sixth Congressional District, which is what you're talking about, I think, with Tom Rees, that seat which had been held by [James] Roosevelt was up for the 1966 election. So it was up that same year. Were you interested in running for Congress at that point?

BEILENSEN: No, not at all. Not at all. I had no desire to run for Congress. I didn't even think about it. On top of which, I liked and was very supportive of Tom Rees, and if he wanted to run I was automatically supportive of his efforts. He was first elected, however, in a special election.

YATES: Yeah, I think you're right. I think I might have it down.

BEILENSEN: No, no. I know I'm right, but what I don't remember at all is what happened to the state senate when he left it and went to. . . . I guess it was unfilled for a while.

YATES: That interim period.

BEILENSEN: I think it was probably only a few months, but he won a very close special election. He only won by a thousand or two thousand votes sometime prior to November of 1966.

YATES: Right. I did look at the Statement of Vote.

BEILENSEN: He was gone by then and I supported him anyway, as I said, just out of loyalty and because he was a very good guy. I had no interest at all or thought about going to Washington. I didn't till much, much later. So it was perfectly natural to support him, and I was delighted to

have a. . . . You know, by his leaving, although I would have been happy if he stayed too, to have a senate district in our own area to run for, which otherwise he would have been here to represent.

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

YATES: We were talking about the 1966 election and what happened with the one man, one vote and the reapportionment.

BEILENSON: Tom Rees beat a man named Leonard Horwin, who was then or shortly before then mayor of Beverly Hills, in a very low turnout special election. I remember his beating him eighteen thousand to seventeen thousand,¹ but I may be way off on that. But it was a very low turnout election and it was a very close election. Anyway, Tom Rees went off sometime either late in '65 or early in 1966 to Washington. What I don't recall is whether or not anybody took his place in the state senate. I guess the answer probably is no. There wouldn't have been time

1. The vote was Rees 21,329, Horwin 19,528.

for . . .

YATES: Yeah, because the next general election, or the primary and the general election came up.

BEILENSEN: Right. I guess you can't appoint such a person, but I just don't recall. But in any case, we were all running for these new open state senate seats in 1966. For us it was easy because there was no incumbent. The difficult part, of course, was for a lot of folks up north, for a lot of incumbent state senators, many of whom had to run against each other, some of whom were given judgeships, some of whom just dropped out. But they were then. . . . Often three or four or five of them even were thrown into a single new senate district because each of them had represented one or two small counties prior to that time and they were all being consolidated.

YATES: So they could have a whole new group of constituents then?

BEILENSEN: Yeah. But also, they were forced to run against each other. They just had to by the nature of the thing. So it was difficult for them and it was easy for us. Almost all of us state assemblymen from Los Angeles ran for the

new seats, state senate seats.

YATES: Let me ask you, you were just mentioning how the new district contained part of your old assembly district. Is that right? So what changed, though, between those two districts in terms of new constituencies . . .

BEILENSEN: Well, there was a decent amount of change and it wasn't identical to the . . . The districts were being changed somewhat and . . .

YATES: And now, just for the record, this was the Twenty-sixth [Senate] District.

BEILENSEN: I think so, but we kept changing numbers all through my lifetime between . . .

YATES: It changed to the Twenty-second [Senate District] later.

BEILENSEN: Right. And then we became Twenty-fourth and then the Twenty-third Congressional [District]. So there was no great logic to it.

YATES: OK, but when you ran it was the Twenty-sixth.

BEILENSEN: I take your word for it.

YATES: OK, [Laughter] go ahead.

BEILENSEN: And as I recall, it included virtually all of our existing Fifty-ninth Assembly District, which was kind of the west side of town-- Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Mar Vista,

Beverlywood, Venice areas--that I had represented now for four years almost, plus some additional areas to the east, largely the Wilshire-Fairfax area. I mean, there were a lot of people in there. I can't recall what else. I think at that point we had part of Hancock Park. We may or may not have had part of Santa Monica. I don't think we did. I think I picked up Santa Monica later for just a four-year stint or something. There were a lot of changes. But basically it was the old Westside Fifty-ninth Assembly District plus another two hundred and fifty thousand, more or less, to the east. That primary campaign was a very major contested campaign.

YATES: Was it?

BEILENSON: Yeah. I mean, it was by far the biggest campaign up to that time. It turned out that we won it quite handily, but I was opposed by a person named Manny Rohatiner . . .

YATES: Oh, right.

BEILENSON: He had served for many, many years as the sort of appointed deputy assistant to, up till then recently, County Supervisor Ernest [E.] Debs, who represented that area. He was a very

active local person, Jewish person, as I am, but there were a great many synagogues and congregations, temples, in that area. I think at the time, I remember sixteen of them. He was close personal friends with an awful lot of active people in the whole Fairfax district, which was overwhelmingly in those days kind of middle-class and Jewish, and had done a lot of favors for a lot of people and was just well known. In any case, we had really quite a competitive campaign. Among other things, he was supported by the former congressman, Jimmy Roosevelt, who of course was a very popular figure especially in that area who. . . .

Although he had campaigned with me in 1962 and 1964 when I was running for the state assembly, we had had a bit of a falling out between us, being two quite different kinds of people. Both he and his staff were very strongly opposed to me and very supportive of Rohatiner. So it was a worrisome campaign for us and one which seemed to be difficult at the time although we won it relatively handily.

YATES: What was your strategy?

BEILENSON: I'll tell you what our strategy was. Our

BEILENSEN: strategy was, and it was very wise, to spend almost all of our time in his district, that is in the area that was new to me, assuming I was relatively well known or at least somewhat well known in my existing district and he was not at all, and believing, again, that contact with people often produced support for you and that every--this was of course just in the primary; it was an overwhelmingly Democratic district once one got past the primary--that every Democratic vote I picked up in "his area," the area where he might be known and I was unknown, at least east of the area I already represented for four years, that every Democratic vote I picked up was in effect two votes. It was one less for him and one for me. So instead of just playing on my own strength, which was over here and which I thought probably was not necessary--which is the way I guess most politicians usually do it--we went to what we thought was his strength.

I'll tell you how effective it was. I'm not sure of the numbers exactly, but it's not terribly important. In the area in what we called his area, the Fairfax area generally, my

wife and I walked in sixty-three precincts out of however many total there were: ninety-some I think, maybe a hundred. We personally walked door-to-door to Democratic households in sixty-three precincts passing out our little books and our little brochures and all that and everything.

YATES: The cookbook?

BEILENSON: Cookbooks still. Right. And of the sixty-three precincts I walked or we walked in, we won sixty-two of them. The thirty-some we didn't walk in, we lost every one. So obviously that made some difference. We were making big inroads. And meanwhile, I ended up clobbering him out in all the western districts, that is the old Fifty-ninth District area. I mean, I was correct in taking it for granted. I didn't do any campaigning there at all except to send around whatever brochure or brochures we mailed out. Just prior to election day in June we sent out around the whole place, the whole district. But I didn't do any walking, any precinct walking, or work in the old district. I just took that for granted, knowing I was relatively strong there

and he wasn't known there. We just spent all our time, as I said, personal time in the new part of the district, where we did quite well. We lost in the new part of the district, as I recall, or came out fairly even. But meanwhile, we won overwhelmingly in the old district. And we won. . . . Again, I forget the numbers entirely. But we won handily over all. Maybe by twenty thousand votes or so.

YATES: Yeah. Actually, I've got the figures. You got 47,351 and he was 27,134.

BEILENSON: Yeah, so it was just twenty thousand. So it was a much bigger win than most people expected of us.

YATES: So he was the main threat to you then.

BEILENSON: Yeah, I don't recall who, if anyone else, ran. But he was the only principal one. He got a lot of mileage from the fact that he lived in the area forever. You know, much longer than I had in California. He grew up here, had a lot of friends here, did a lot of favors and services for people as Debs's assistant, and had the endorsement and support of Jimmy Roosevelt, a very popular congressman, especially in that part of the district.

YATES: Now, did you do any other types of personal contact besides the precinct walking?

BEILENSEN: I don't recall. . . . Yes. What I'm sure we did, but I don't remember a lot of it, was in each of these. . . . Now that you're jogging my memory there's one thing we did leave out. It was not terribly important in '62 and '64. It came into play again in 1966. In each of those campaign years, and ever since then too, the other form of campaigning that we did was coffee hours. You would get. . . . I'm glad you finally got me to remember that. But I remember there was a decent amount of it in 1966. What you do is. . . . Again, it was within these new areas, in the new part. The Rohatiner area, so-called. You would find a friend or a person who was supporting you and you would ask usually that couple or that woman if we could have a coffee hour at her apartment, at her home. We would send out to the surrounding precinct or maybe two surrounding precincts a little folded invitation. You know, "Come have coffee and meet with Assemblyman Anthony Beilenson, Democratic candidate for state senate." So

BEILENSON: you'd send them out. You know, "Come meet us at Joan Stevenson's house," or apartment or something of that sort. So this would be lots of little local mailings prior to the primary election. You'd get anywhere from five to twenty people at these things. I mean, they were very small. I'd give my little talk, and I'd answer questions, and you'd make a few friends. Usually sometimes a couple would come. Sometimes one of either the husband or the wife would come, but then the husband or wife who didn't come would be told by the one who came, "I met this nice young man, Assemblyman Beilenson. He's running for a state senate thing." I'm sure that 95 percent of the people who bothered to come out and meet you at one of these little things--probably only a few hundred people in total; we probably had thirty or forty such, or fifty such, little coffee hours--voted for you because they had met you. It was just that simple. Plus the people whose homes we had [used]. Plus the fact that every time you had a coffee hour you had an excuse for a little local mailing, so that people who didn't come to see you

nonetheless perhaps remembered that Assemblyman Beilenson had come and met with people in their neighborhood.

YATES: Right. It would jog their memory.

BEILENSEN: Right. It gives you an extra little mailing. One other thing which I forgot to tell you before, which is a good little thing: in '62 and in '64, especially in '62, also in '66, when I and my wife, too--I did a little more walking than she did--went around and left a cookbook for somebody or whatever, at the time we did it. . . . Whenever I left a book. . . . Gave a book to somebody, or left a book for them. . . . I usually gave it to them. I didn't usually leave a book if they weren't there. I just left a little brochure with a little note pinned on it, "Came by, sorry to have missed you." I'd come back to my headquarters and I would have checked off in certain ways the various people I had seen. We would type up within a day or two. . . . One of our volunteers at headquarters would type up a little note saying "Dear Mrs. Goldsmith, it was really good meeting you today," or Monday or whatever it might have been. "I hope very much

you'll read the literature I left with you and I hope you'll enjoy using my cookbook.

Sincerely, Tony Beilenson." We would mail that out right away, so that people got a letter back from me, a personal letter, within three or four or five days.

We would also at that time type up a second letter dated like June 1, "Dear Mrs. Goldsmith," or whatever the name was, "I hope you remember. . . ." I did it better than this. This doesn't sound awfully nice, but something. . . . "I hope you remember meeting me several weeks ago when I came by and introduced myself." Second paragraph, "I hope you've enjoyed using my cookbook and I hope you'll remember to come out and vote for me next Tuesday, June 5, which is election day." So they were reminded. They got two letters. One immediately and one that they received a day or two before the primary date, that I had come by six weeks before and given them a cookbook and "Please come out and vote for me."

YATES: So you did this in '62 and then you also did this in '66?

BEILENSON: 'Sixty-six. Actually, we did more of it in

'66. 'Sixty-six was a really big campaign, where we really did a lot of things of that sort. Extra mailings into this new area I was unsure about further to the east that Rohatiner was so strong in, got us to do a lot of this. I did a lot of precinct walking in that year, that spring.

YATES: Leading up to that primary where Rohatiner was your main opponent, what differentiated the two of you?

BEILENSON: Now, that's a legitimate question to ask and in a sense it was. . . . I mean, in terms of issues, for example, it was all irrelevant.

YATES: OK.

BEILENSON: It's sad to say maybe, especially I guess in primaries I suppose it's true, there tends to be little difference often, certainly then, probably still now, between Democrats in a primary or Republicans in their primary, although these days more conservative Republicans tend to beat more moderate ones.

YATES: Well, I was just wondering again if an issue came up or something that. . . . Some of this we could find a record of it.

BEILENSON: I think the answer is no. I think it was just

BEILENSEN: as simple as we've been talking about, as we've been describing. I was relatively well known in the western half of the district because I had represented them for four years and I was a relatively popular assemblyman; no one had ever heard of Rohatiner. Just the opposite was true in his area. A lot of people had heard of him, nobody had heard of me. Not everybody had heard of him either. He wasn't an elected official. This was the first time he had ever run for office, but he had a lot of support from a lot of the Jewish groups and from the synagogues, or he just knew everybody and was friends with these people and was helpful to them for years and years and years. I was totally new to them, so we spent as much time as possible introducing ourselves, myself and my wife, to people on as personal basis as we could through coffee hours, through walking door-to-door. It worked very, very well. I think we would have won no matter what, but I think we won by a more comfortable margin, as you said, forty-seven thousand to twenty-seven thousand, because of all our efforts. They really paid off.

But he obviously ran a pretty strong campaign, had a lot of support, and a lot of it may have come from Roosevelt's support, because he did awfully well against an incumbent from one half of the district and for someone who was not an office holder.

YATES: Once you won the primary your Republican opponent was Alexander [N.] Campbell. How difficult was the campaign after that point?

BEILENSON: I have no recollection of him at all. I don't think I ever met him, heard from him. I remember his last name, but not his first name. Although you always worry a bit, especially when it's the first time in a new district, which this was. . . . We did some kind of a campaign I'm sure. I think we just took it for granted that it was a Democratic district, and we did a very modest amount of work, and I sent out a mailing or two at the end, and that was it. I do not recall any campaign at all in the general election.

YATES: One thing--I'm just looking at my notes--that I did have written down, and I don't know at what point in the campaign this came up, but that you were accused of being anti-Semitic because

of a bill that you [voted against].

BEILENSEN: Yeah. Which campaign was that?

YATES: I think this was '66, if I have this correct.

BEILENSEN: I do too.

YATES: But you don't recall that as . . .

BEILENSEN: No, I do. I recall very clearly.

YATES: How much of a problem did you perceive that to be?

BEILENSEN: Thank you for reminding me. No, I remember very clearly and I wasn't sure of the . . .

YATES: I'm sorry.

BEILENSEN: No, no. I wasn't sure of the year, but I'll tell you exactly what it was. And I'm almost sure you're correct. It was in '66. I think earlier in 1966, while the primary was going on. . . . In fact, there were a couple of interesting bills. Thank you for jogging my memory. One was a bill introduced by Assemblyman. . . . God, his name escapes me. Right next door.

YATES: I can get . . .

BEILENSEN: Lester [A.] McMillan.

YATES: OK, that sounds right.

BEILENSEN: Yes, it was right. He was a liberal, good Democrat, kind of an elderly gentleman at the

BEILENSON: time, probably almost ten years younger than I am now, but he seemed elderly, who had been around for quite a while. He was losing some touch with the district, but nonetheless he was a very good guy. He introduced a bill called-- this is an interesting little story--introduced a bill called the Anti-Advocacy of Genocide Bill. He introduced it at the behest of the Jewish war veterans, who were very strong in his area. And his area was the other half of my new area. That is, the new half of this new senate district. The Rohatiner area. The Fairfax area.

McMillan was not Jewish, of course, but he had for a long time represented this heavily Jewish, heavily Democratic area. McMillan was, as I said, a good liberal and good civil libertarian. His bill was presented one evening, in a long and very acrimonious hearing, to the Criminal Procedure Committee, which I was a member of and had been for all four years I was in the state legislature, state assembly. He came to us before the hearing and sort of. . . . He was a good guy. He told all of us Democrats and maybe some

BEILENSON: Republicans on the committee. . . . He said, "I'm really embarrassed about this bill. It's clearly unconstitutional, but the Jewish war veterans in my district wanted me to introduce it so I did." It made it a felony to advocate genocide. It was directed at George Lincoln Rockwell, who was then the head of the American Nazi Party. Obviously Jewish people, especially elderly Jewish people, and others. . . . This is a big issue to them, or at least when they heard about it it was.

Anyway, after this long hearing the Democrats who had some political courage. . . . All of us voted against it and the Republicans mostly voted for it. We had a Democratic majority of five to four or six to four, whatever it might have been. So the bill was defeated. So Rohatiner used this vote, in a sense. "When Assemblyman Beilenson, who now seeks to represent us in the state senate, had a chance to vote for the bill to keep George Lincoln Rockwell from spouting his Nazi fascistic rantings in America, he voted against the bill." I am sure that in certain areas, especially again the Rohatiner area, the

Fairfax area, that was a very telling argument and very effective vote to use as an issue.

Now, there's one other.

YATES: So how did you deal with that?

BEILENSEN: I don't think I dealt with it. He sent out some literature which talked about the bill. I don't recall having had public meetings with him.

YATES: No constituents that you can remember confronted you with this?

BEILENSEN: Yes, there were some. They knew enough about it. And he was being supported by the local, the then so-called Waxman papers, newspapers. Henry [A.] Waxman who defeated McMillan with my support in a primary. My support didn't figure into it, but he shortly thereafter . . .

YATES: You did support him for that though?

BEILENSEN: I supported him against an incumbent, McMillan, who was a good guy, but Waxman was obviously a better guy and McMillan I thought had outlived his usefulness, which was a nice way to put it. I was partly getting back at him for this issue, having created all this trouble for me. But the local. . . . I don't remember the names of the papers, but there was some Fairfax

BEILENSON: newspaper which everybody either got as a throwaway or subscribed to, which strongly supported Rohatiner against me, and was a big Roosevelt-supporting paper. So there's a lot of stuff in the Fairfax area about Roosevelt and Rohatiner, one supporting the other, and how bad I was, and how bad I was on this issue and other things like that. So yes, it was a real issue over there, and I think contributed to his strong showing on that side of town.

There was one other issue, which was an interesting one, which may or may not have played much of a role. In 1966 I was then on the Ways and Means Committee, as we've discussed. Governor Brown, to his credit, in his budget, which he submitted to the legislature that year, for the first time omitted support at some ridiculously low level-- I think it was \$25,000--for the state kosher food inspector, saying, and I agreed with him entirely, that if a religion wants to enforce its own dietary laws it should undertake that on its own, and it shouldn't be done through the state. The state shouldn't be funding this guy, which apparently the state had done for

BEILENSEN: some years. It became a great big subject matter. We had a several billion dollar state budget; we're talking about an item of \$25,000. We had a long hearing in Sacramento in the Ways and Means Committee one afternoon during the primary season, during which at least six rabbis came and testified. Three on behalf of the governor's positions and three on behalf of keeping it in the budget. Of those six rabbis, five of them were from our district. Three opposed to my position. Two in support of my position. At the time I had no trouble voting the way I wanted. I was going to vote the way I wanted to support keeping it out of the budget, which we did. But nonetheless, it was a difficult kind of thing politically to do, because you had three rabbis from this district I was running in for the first time, this new state senate district from the Fairfax area, and a lot of their supporters up there getting very angry at me for being a Jewish member from their own portion of Los Angeles, from their own portion of the state, voting against their position. That was used as an issue by

Rohatiner, but I suspect it wasn't nearly so effective an issue as the George Lincoln Rockwell [Anti-]Advocacy of Genocide was.

YATES: In terms of your campaign strategy then, walking the new precincts. . . . Doing that was effective enough to gain you votes?

BEILENSEN: Clearly it was. As I said, I won every precinct but one that we walked in. Obviously we learned then. . . . You learn as you go along. But we sort of sensed then, and we know since, that the vast majority of people out there, except every now and then on some particular issue, just aren't aware of these things. I mean, some people were aware of it and every now and then some would question me about the [Anti-]Advocacy of Genocide Act or why I voted that way or something. If you could explain it face to face you could usually seem like a rational, sensible person, and they don't get too excited about it. But it clearly had some use for him. He made some good use of it as an effective issue, but for most people they probably hadn't heard about it. But in any case, again, when you have had a chance to

BEILENSON: introduce yourself to someone face to face it
makes a lot of difference.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Session 3, September 8, 1997]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

YATES: We ended last time discussing the 1966 campaign for the state senate. Your campaign. So . . .

BEILENSEN: Which we decided I won.

YATES: Right. [Laughter]

BEILENSEN: Even though I couldn't remember it.

YATES: I wanted to start today by asking you this. How did being in the state senate compare with the assembly?

BEILENSEN: Well, let me think out loud if I may. I've not thought about this for a while. Before I discuss the differences, which there are a good many I think, let me also mention, in a sense, the similarities or peculiarities of our own particular year. I came to the senate in 1967, the year after the reapportionment that was required by the U.S. Supreme Court's one man, one vote decision just a year or so earlier, so that there were, for example, now fourteen state senators from Los Angeles County, based

BEILENSON: largely on population, instead of the single one we'd had before. What that meant in reality was that a lot of us who had served together over in the assembly for two years or four years, in some cases even longer, now found ourselves together as new members of the state senate.

Instead of coming to the senate as one of a small handful of new members, as I suppose was usually the case after an election year, there were a large number of new people there. . . . A majority of the senate--bare majority, I think--was new. That is, new as senators. But a large fraction of those twenty-some people had earlier served together over in the assembly and therefore we knew each other. I say that only because we were amongst a lot of familiar friends and faces, even though we were new state senators. On the other hand of course, there was some strength in our numbers, and it caused some worry on the part of the so-called old guard of the senate.

Nonetheless, we ran into a. . . . We had become members of one house of the legislature, which still, at that time, was organized and

BEILENSON: worked quite differently than did the assembly, which we were used to. The assembly had a single speaker who had, in a sense, ultimate power over everybody and everything. And in fact, we had served under a speaker who exercised that power to a great extent, Jesse Unruh. In the senate the power was diffused more. It resided in a five-member Rules Committee. It resided, more than I think it did in the assembly, in the chairmen of the individual committees, even as it does in Congress still to this day. And to an extent we did not understand at first, but soon came to appreciate, an awful lot of influence was exerted behind the scenes by lobbyists who maintained close ties to many of the longtime members of the senate. In fact, several of the most influential of the lobbyists had themselves served in the legislature in one house or the other in years past, and were personal friends of some of the senators.

So it was quite a different institution. It still worked very much the way I think it had worked a hundred years or so earlier, whereas the assembly, especially in the more

recent past under Jesse Unruh and his predecessors, his immediate predecessors, had changed and had become a more modern legislative institution.

YATES: OK. You know, when I read Tom Rees's interview¹ he said that, "The assembly has always been the more aggressive and the more creative of the two houses." How would you respond to that?

BEILENSEN: I think there's some validity to what he said, certainly at the time he served in the senate and prior to that time. The senate then was, and remained to a certain extent, the more conservative of the two houses in the sense that it acted a little bit more slowly on legislation, things had to percolate a little bit longer over there before they were enacted into law. Very much the way things usually happen, I think, in the United States Senate. I rather like that myself. Over all these

1. Thomas M. Rees, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1987 by Carlos Vasquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

BEILENSEN: years I've come to believe that the legislature is and should be a relatively conservative, or cautious, or careful, branch of the government, instead of rushing headlong to judgment on things and reacting immediately to some perceived public excitement about an issue that too many politicians will pick up and run with before it's carefully thought out. I've come to believe quite strongly that the legislature should be a relatively moderating influence on these rushes to enact into law all kinds of ideas, which may seem appropriate at first but after a while seem less so.

So the senate was a slower-moving body. Even after we came. As I said, that part's fine. I think it serves a very useful function for it to act that way. But the main problem we discovered once we'd been elected to it was that to a great extent we new members, except for a handful of the new group who were easily and quickly co-opted by the old guard. . . . They realized sensibly enough they would have to pick up a few of the new arrivals to consolidate or maintain their own control. So they picked a few of the new guys and gave them

good committee assignments and I guess it was understood that they'd go along with the establishment. But we realized very quickly that we didn't have the individual responsibility or authority that we had had over in the state assembly. That of course, among other things, led to two or three years of warfare within the senate, which ended ultimately in our overthrowing the old guard.

YATES: You're talking about. . . . With the president pro tem?

BEILENSON: Yes, and some other members of the Rules Committee. They did this in a very interesting way. Even though we were legislative veterans to a modest extent--most of us had been there at least four years in the other house, some longer--we really were not all that aware when we first found ourselves in the senate. We asked for and were given for the most part many of the committee assignments we wanted. I asked for the [Public] Health Committee, which had been my interest over in the assembly; I asked for the Judiciary Committee, which had been one of my interests, and so on and so forth; and got most of the committees that I

BEILENSON: wanted. So did most of my colleagues. What we didn't understand at first was that the senate leadership reserved three or four of the committees out of however many there may have been, twelve or fourteen, for themselves, for them to maintain complete control over. It was to those committees that they sent bills that were of particular interest to them or, more precisely, of interest to their lobbyist friends. They controlled the senate Finance Committee of course, which was the principal committee through which all major legislation went. They controlled the Governmental Organization Committee. It was kind of a catch-all committee and then known often as the "graveyard committee," to which bills were sent that lobbyists wanted killed. The membership was made up almost entirely of old guard senators who did the bidding of the lobbyists. Almost none of us new members got on that. We weren't all that interested in it at first. We didn't realize that's where they sent all the big bills. They didn't mind putting me on Judiciary Committee or Health Committee because nobody cared about those committees. We could

have a good time on those committees as much as we wanted because they weren't all that interested in them.

YATES: And then it sounds like it would be old guard then on the Rules Committee, obviously, because that's the critical . . .

BEILENSON: Exactly. The five members of the Rules Committee, which in effect had the powers of the speaker over in the assembly, the powers to decide to which committee bills were to be sent and to decide on membership and the makeup of the committees and the committee chairmen. The Rules Committee was made up entirely of old guard members. And of course so long as they maintained that control, they were happy to let us have as much fun as we wanted to in all the unimportant places. . . . As long as they maintained control over their lifelines, as it were.

YATES: I know in your previous interview you talked some about the change in the old guard, I think, directly in relation to the president pro tem Hugh Burns, I believe. I did want to ask you about not just him but the various president pro tems who were there when you were

in the state senate. But it sounds like from what you're saying to me, it's not just who's in that position, but it's who is on the Rules Committee. So there would have to be a change there too.

BEILENSON: You would have to change the Rules Committee or at least make enough changes in it so that the remaining members would be aware of the fact that if they did not henceforth go along with the desires of the majority of their colleagues within the senate, that perhaps they themselves would be replaced. In other words, they had to be responsive to the membership instead of to some outside influences, in most cases lobbyists or special interests.

YATES: Yeah, I believe you did say then that it changed after you had been there, it would have been two or three years into your time there.

BEILENSON: Yes. I don't remember the exact date. I think it was sometime in 1969, in the spring of 1969, when after being there about two years and becoming more and more unhappy with the situation, a bipartisan group of us, so-called young turks, I guess--I think such groups are always referred to as young turks--finally

BEILENSON: succeeded in replacing Hugh Burns, who was a conservative Democrat, with Howard Way of Exeter, who was a moderate Republican. It was a little bit difficult to explain to some of my Democratic partisan friends back home in Los Angeles--although it wasn't all that difficult--because in effect we were giving control of the Rules Committee to a majority of three Republicans instead of three Democrats. But there was also now a majority which would be reflective of the desires of the body of senators rather than of the special interests.

Now, that success of ours, as you know, did not last very long at first. Howard Way was thrown out, was replaced as president pro tem just several months after we had succeeded in getting him elected. His place was filled by a conservative Republican from San Diego named Jack Schrade, whom we were all fond of personally, although he was back in the old mold of a Hugh Burns and some of the other old guard members. But he was smart enough. . . . He and his colleagues were smart enough, once he had been elected to the position of pro tem, not to strip all of the new members of some of

BEILENSON: the perquisites, or chairmanships, or committees that they had gained when Howard Way had been first elected president pro tem several months earlier. I, for example, after Howard's accession to the president pro temship, had been appointed by the Rules Committee as chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee. When Jack Schrade overthrew Howard Way, he left me in that position. It was a very smart thing of him to do, not referring just to me, but he did that with respect to virtually everybody else who had gained these new positions so that we remained happy. Not so happy as we would have been if Howard had continued in the position instead of Jack. But nonetheless, we retained our responsibilities and our ability to act as useful members of the state senate with some authority, as we had when Howard Way was there. We were basically left alone.

So even though for the remainder of that session the old guard retook possession or control of the Rules Committee, the truth of the matter is that the way the senate worked had really been changed forever and for good

when Howard Way was first elected. Even though Schrade then took his place, and though things reverted partially to the way they had been before, they did not revert all the way and they never did again. The die had been broken and from then on the senate--albeit grudgingly with respect to some of the old-time members--the senate was a far more responsive and democratic, with a small "d," organization than it had been earlier.

YATES: So explain the context of that. What's happening with the Rules Committee?

BEILENSON: The only thing I remember is that we replaced originally Hugh Burns with Howard Way and then Howard was replaced by Jack Schrade. I do not recall if there were any other changes made in the Rules Committee.

YATES: But that was the critical change then?

BEILENSON: Apparently. Although thinking back, it doesn't sound like an adequate explanation because members from both parties on the Rules Committee were old guard people at that time. One would think that one would have had to change more than the pro tem. But it may have been that doing so sent a strong enough signal

so that enough other members of the Rules Committee then would have become responsive to the other members of the senate. We didn't need to change any members. But I'm embarrassed not to recall if we made any further changes at that time.

YATES: That's all right. I was just wondering about that when you were explaining how the power was diffused more.

BEILENSEN: Well, it was the five members of the Rules Committee. Obviously they take the president pro tem as the leader, and to a great extent people take their signals from him. But if the four remaining old guard members--if in fact four still were there--dug in their heels, he would have not have had control of the place even then. I do not recall whether we simply replaced Hugh Burns or whether . . .

YATES: What else happened.

BEILENSEN: Yeah.

YATES: As long as we're talking about the president pro tem, and you mentioned three, then of course [James R.] Jim Mills came in.

BEILENSEN: The Democrats won majority control over the state senate in the next election. I think it

was 1970, but I'm not sure.

YATES: Yeah, I have the dates.

BEILENSEN: And again, I'm not positive of my figures, but I believe we had a twenty-one to nineteen majority. That being the case, we had the ability if we all stuck together, and we did that time, to elect a Democrat. Instead of Jack Schrade, who had been a Republican, we elected a Democrat pro tem. We elected Jim Mills, who was one of our original group of young turks and had been involved with me and many others on both sides in throwing out Hugh Burns just a couple of years earlier. In any case, now for the first time since Hugh Burns himself, we had a Democratic member as president pro tem, and we had someone who was not a member of the old guard but somebody who was part of our new covey of former assemblymen who had come over to the senate just two or three years earlier.

YATES: And how would you compare him with the previous president pro tems? Either the Democratic or the Republican.

BEILENSEN: Well, by then we'd basically broken the power of the lobbyists, at least. . . . I mean, they

BEILENSEN: always maintained, and still do, too much power in my opinion and have too much influence up there. But from the moment that we replaced Hugh Burns, their direct access to all the levers of power really was broken, although it was reinstated to a certain extent when Jack Schrade was there for the year or so that he remained there. But I think it's fair to say that once Jim Mills was elected president pro tem after the 1970 elections, that that clearly marks the beginning of sort of the new era of the state senate. By then most of the traces of the old arrangements had been broken for good and completely, and remained so. I think from the time of Jim Mill's accession to the president pro temship that one can. . . . Even though the previous two or three years was a transitional phase, from then on the senate was a good deal different from the way it had been from its previous history.

And from then on, so far as I'm aware, the leadership in the senate depended upon the majority control of the senate, which was not the case before. That is if the Republicans had twenty-one or more members they elected the

majority of the leadership: the pro tem and two of the members of the Rules Committee. The Democrats have the other two and vice versa. Whereas prior to that time, the partisan makeup of the Rules Committee was largely irrelevant. They had for a good many years--I think longer than anybody except perhaps Jim Mills himself, I'm not sure; maybe longer than Jim--Hugh Burns serving there. But even at times when the place was relatively conservative and perhaps leaned Republican, it didn't make any difference. They were all the same kind of people. It didn't make much difference if they were Republicans or Democrats.

YATES: OK. I think this is appropriate to ask, but let me now shift a little bit to their relationship to the governor's office. How effective were each of them in working with the governor's office?

BEILENSON: The presidents pro tem?

YATES: Yeah.

BEILENSON: I think it's fair to say that any governor must have had a much more difficult time in dealing with the state senate even than he did with the assembly. That is, even when the assembly was

BEILENSON: run by someone like Jesse Unruh, who was a strong speaker and had a mind of his own. At least when you're dealing as chief executive with the speaker, with the assembly, you have a person you can deal with. If you cut a deal with the speaker, Mr. Unruh let's say. . . . I don't mean to cut a deal. But if you come to an understanding with him that he and his Democratic majority would be supportive of such and such bills, and/or that they'll be supportive of some other things you want if some other changes perhaps are made, or whatever, or some other considerations are granted, then you can basically count on that occurring, I think, because a speaker can make things happen.

I should think that a governor would have a much more difficult time with the senate. Even as the president has a more difficult time with the United States Senate. It's really a different kind of organism. Having close ties with the president pro tem in and of itself won't do it for you, although obviously it will help. And if you're a Democratic governor and you've got a Democratic senate, even if it's

just one by a very narrow margin, with any luck at all and some good will, and some hard work, you can get them to come along on most of your major stuff. Of course, what we faced there while this was going on was a change in the governorship. Mr. [Ronald W.] Reagan was first elected in 1966, I guess.

YATES: Right, 1966.

BEILENSON: And of course, reelected in 1970. So during the time that our struggles with Hugh Burns were going on and Howard Way and Jack Schrade, we were also having to deal with a new, more conservative, and for the first time in some years, Republican governor. Once the Democrats clearly got control of the state senate, starting just after 1970 when Jim Mills was elected as we just discussed, we had Mr. Reagan back for his second term. And I don't remember, frankly, an awful lot about how the governor dealt with the senate. He was a strong governor. Stronger as all of them are in their first term than in their second, so by the time we new people, we young turks were in fairly thorough control, starting in 1971, he already was beginning his second term. As far

as I can recall we got along relatively well. He was not nearly so partisan or so hard-edged as he became later when he became president. Nor did he have the power, as it were, by appealing to the public over our heads via television or radio, whatever it might have been, whatever means he might have used, to influence the legislature nearly so strongly nor so well as he was able to do in later years when he was president. People pay a lot more attention to presidents. When presidents get on the air people listen to them, and they call up Congress in response and so on. People just aren't that interested, or responsive usually, when it comes to state issues. I don't think he had that large an agenda, especially in his second term when we gained control of the senate. I don't recall our having particular problems with him or him with us. That may not have been the actual case. I was not . . .

YATES: But that's how you remember it.

BEILENSON: Yeah. I don't remember. . . . Here too, even though I was close to the leadership because our people were now in charge and I was a committee chairman and so on, unless it was

something that I was dealing with directly, that it was something in my own jurisdiction or my own committee's jurisdiction, I didn't have any direct relations with the governor. Now of course, I did have some significant relations with the governor's office with respect to a particular bill, which was the Welfare Reform Act,¹ which we dealt with starting early in 1971 just after he had been reelected and I was then still chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee.

YATES: Right. And you talked about that quite a bit in your previous interview.

BEILENSON: Right. I did, but just speaking very briefly about it now that we're on this subject, it's an interesting example of how a governor deals differently with the senate than he does with the assembly or vice versa. In this particular case the senate first worked its will in a very complex but thorough and, I think, very useful way in writing what in fact was meant to be, turned out not quite to be, because we didn't

1. S.B. 796, 1971 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 578.

BEILENSON: get much support from our Republican friends, who at that time by then had been pressured by the governor not to support the bill. . . . We had spent eight weeks or more writing what was intended to be a bipartisan welfare reform bill in response to his push for it. I give him credit for it. That's what he campaigned on in the 1970 elections. Through our committee and through a whole series of hearings we wrote a bill which took the best parts, I thought, from our own proposals, from the governor's proposals, from some other Republican proposals, from some good colleagues and friends of mine, Republican friends, in the senate. That bill was passed by the senate, and we were going to take it over to the assembly and go through the same process there when we ran right into the decision by the then speaker of the state assembly, [Robert] Bob Moretti, together with the governor, to negotiate out a Welfare Reform Act.

Now, a speaker was able to do that. There would have been no one in the senate, I think, with the authority or power to say, "Let's not even have hearings on welfare reform," this

huge issue which the governor has gotten the whole state excited about. "Let's just go down to the governor's office and negotiate out a bill." And in fact, we didn't do it in the senate. We did it the proper legislative way. In fact, usually it happens the other way around often--the assembly will do a better job of legislating than the senate. But in this case we did a much better job, in a sense, than they. Or at least we did it in the traditional, what I believe to be the proper way. The assembly ended up never having hearings on the Welfare Reform Act, any real hearings on it, other than just . . .

YATES: That is surprising.

BEILENSON: Yeah. So anyway, we ran into this wall when we took the bill over to the assembly. The speaker and the governor had agreed to go down to the governor's office and bring everybody down who was interested and involved to negotiate out some kind of "welfare reform act," and that's what we did. I ended up being the only senator down there in those negotiations, which put me in a very difficult position. But the speaker had complete control

over his side to do whatever he wanted. He could send it down there for negotiations. When something came out that he agreed to he could get it passed by his house. I had to go back as a single Democrat to a senate that wasn't led by any single person, couldn't be directed by any single person, especially not me--I wasn't in the leadership and I wasn't on the Rules Committee--and had to sell the majority of the senate on this welfare reform proposal.

YATES: How did you do that?

BEILENSON: Well, it wasn't that difficult because we had a Republican governor who signed on to the eventual outcome, to the bill, and therefore brought along most of the Republicans in the state senate, who made up close to a majority, just a few less than a majority. And I was, I think, a relatively popular and respected member in general and certainly among the Democrats, and brought along a substantial portion of the Democrats, a majority of them, many of whom were inclined to vote for welfare reform anyway, whatever it turned out to be in the bill, because the public kind of wanted it

BEILENSON: and it was a very popular issue at that time. I lost several liberal colleagues who felt uncomfortable voting for a welfare reform bill that the governor had endorsed and signed on to, not knowing. . . . Well, they knew because I explained it to them, but not really quite accepting the fact or being willing to go home and explain to their Democratic partisans at home that in fact, even though the governor was going to sign the bill and support it, that it was a very good bill that many liberal Democrats had a strong hand in drafting and were also supporting it.

As I recall, we got perhaps three-quarters of the votes in the state senate, but I didn't need to work hard at getting them. I worked hard at trying to get some of the more liberal Democrats to come along. And most did, but some didn't and I didn't blame them. It didn't make any difference and we didn't need their votes. So in a strange way I had a very. . . . I was able to speak for the entire senate. Anything I agreed to, since I was the only senator there, and since we were likely to get whatever bill we agreed to passed by both

houses and certainly signed by the governor, I was able in a sense to speak alone for the senate, even though most of the senate wasn't even aware of it or whatever.

I had a great deal of help from the speaker, Bob Moretti, who first of all was a good friend of mine as well as a lot of other people, and was a fine legislator. We had all been good friends over in the state assembly together. He told me and told the governor's people at the outset, at the beginning of the negotiations, that he and his people on the assembly side would be supportive of any position that I took on any of the substantive portions of the bill. So the governor and his people, more specifically, had to deal with me. I was able to tell that to my Democratic friends in the senate, so they felt a little more comfortable about what we came out with.

YATES: How did you find dealing with the governor and his staff?

BEILENSON: It turned out to be not a bad experience at all. It was a perfectly pleasant one as a matter of fact, for a number of reasons. One was, with respect to dealing with the. . . .

BEILENSON: Let me back up a bit. The governor and the speaker were present at our negotiations, at our meetings, only in the very beginning. As I recall, only for portions of the first day or two where we just sort of said that we all. . . . Perhaps a dozen of us met in the governor's office and we kind of discussed in general what we wanted to do, what we had in mind. The governor, as always, was affable and friendly and not terribly well-educated to the specifics of the problem. He was just interested in getting welfare reform done, whatever that was, because that's what he had been campaigning on, and hadn't dug very deeply into the specifics of it or the particular problems that the specifics started to raise once you got into them. Both he and Bob Moretti basically turned the negotiations over to others and left the premises.

We were left then with another eleven or twelve or thirteen days of negotiating-- sometimes ten or twelve or fifteen hours a day down in a windowless office downstairs off the governor's own office. Neither the governor nor the speaker was there anymore. We didn't

BEILENSON: see the governor again until he signed the bill into law at a press conference three or four weeks later. I was there for the senate, I and some couple of staff members of mine. Three or four or five assemblymen were there on behalf of the speaker and the other members of the assembly, and they had some staff people. The governor had four or five of his people there at one time or another, including [Edwin] Ed Meese [III], who was then his chief of staff, I think, and Earl [W.] Brian, who was then head of his Health and Welfare Agency, and a fellow named [Robert E.] Bob Carlson, who was his welfare director, and two or three others. We just hammered out the specifics of it. As everybody discovers once they get into these kinds of negotiations, even if you can agree in general about the main outlines of your proposal ahead of time, as we basically had, when you get down to actually writing legislation it becomes unbelievably complicated and difficult, because the specific way you write means that this is going to happen or that's going to happen. You can describe it in general terms, but it's not adequate to the

purposes when you get down to actually writing legislation.

YATES: In retrospect, how do you feel it turned out?

BEILENSON: It turned out wonderfully well, that particular bill. The other thing I began to allude to a few minutes ago and then forgot was that it became very clear early on. . . . I mean, we had a real advantage over the governor, which only slowly did I realize. I made a note to myself about halfway through the negotiations, which I still have somewhere, in which I wrote, "They really want this bill," and I underlined "really." It became obvious to me finally--I was a fool not to understand this at first--that they were in a sense stuck in these negotiations and they had to come out with, or they felt they had to come out with, some kind of welfare reform bill. And here they were dealing with me and some other liberal Democrats and with Bob Moretti, a liberal Democratic speaker. They were kind of at our mercy, to a certain extent.

We ended up, although very few people have ever understood or appreciated this, writing a very liberal and a very decent and humane

BEILENSEN: welfare reform act. We put in all kinds of things that the governor specifically had vetoed in earlier years. We put in some family planning programs of mine. We put in some day care provisions, because in order to get mothers off of welfare you've got to give them some job training, and if you do that and they've got infant kids, they have to place the kids somewhere. We put in a day care bill, which one of my Democratic colleagues had carried the year before and it had been vetoed by the governor, Governor Reagan. We put in some job training program moneys and directives that were almost identical to a job training program that Governor Reagan had vetoed a year before. And on top of that, we put in an automatic cost of living increase for welfare recipients, so their benefits wouldn't be eroded over the years as inflation rose, but would rise with them. If the inflation rate went up 3 percent, the AFDC benefits would go up. . . . The Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits would go up 3 percent that year, even as Social Security benefits and other things go up. We put that in the bill.

BEILENSON: This is something which Governor Pat Brown, a liberal Democrat, had refused to support several years earlier because of his concern for the cost. So those were some of the good things in there.

On the other hand, we put in a whole bunch of stuff, a lot of verbiage and things that the governor and his people wanted about finding delinquent fathers, and giving additional aid and encouragement to district attorneys to go after these people, and some other harsh language which didn't in the real world have very much effect, that sort of bore out the governor's points of view on this kind of thing. But all I can say is that the liberal Democrats who were involved in drafting the bill and those who on the outside were helpful to us in drafting it, even though publicly some of them couldn't afford to say so, were delighted with the bill we finally ended up with. All the governor's people and the governor himself particularly wanted was to be able to crow about having got the legislature to pass a welfare reform act as the governor had demanded.

So we did pass one, and it was so good a welfare reform act that when the United States Congress in 1988, just a few years ago now, was ranking the various states in the ways that they treated their welfare recipients, California came in second. Among other reasons, we had all of these humane proposals-- most importantly, the automatic cost of living increase from our bill of twenty-some years earlier, almost twenty years earlier.

YATES: Back to talking about the relationship of the senate with the governor's office, how effective was the leadership of the senate with the change in the governorship? And I'm talking about [Edmund G.] "Jerry" Brown [Jr.].

BEILENSON: Well, the advent of Jerry Brown presented problems of its own. It presented even larger problems, in a sense, that he arrived at a time when we still had Democratic majorities, as I recall, in the state legislature, because he was not at all the kind of governor that anybody had been used to. I happen to have had a lot of involvement with him, because for the first two years he was governor I was chairman of the senate Finance Committee, and as such

BEILENSEN: acted as the author of the governor's budget bill. The governor would introduce a bill, it would be introduced for him by the chairman of the senate Finance Committee, which I then was. I, therefore, found myself in a position my last two years in the state senate, and his first two years as governor, of having to work very closely with the governor--a governor--for the first time really on a continuous basis. My involvement with Mr. Reagan was the abortion bill [Therapeutic Abortion Act], then later on the Welfare Reform Act and a couple of other things. But here, for a good portion of each year I had to work very closely with the governor and his office on getting his budget bill through the legislature in as good shape as one possibly could.

At first, we all kind of welcomed his becoming governor because we'd had eight years of Mr. Reagan. It was nice to have a Democrat again. One thought it might be easier to work with him than it had been with the Reagan people, and I suppose in some respects it was. On the other hand, he was more difficult. Difficult's the wrong word. He was so

BEILENSEN: different. Working with him was just quite a different experience than it ever had been working with Mr. Reagan or Pat Brown, or before them anyone else, for all of the legislators who had to work with them.

He had peculiar personal habits and hours, for example. We would often not meet with him until five or six in the evening. I think he slept really late. I mean, I did too, but I didn't so late as he did. He wasn't really ready to talk about stuff till suppertime. We often would go out to supper together at some local restaurant, a few of us, with him and talk about stuff, come back to his office at eight or nine o'clock and start getting serious about budget matters. Well, I had three small children who lived nearby, five, ten minutes away, and I always went home for supper until those several times I had to stay downtown and deal with Governor Jerry Brown and his budget problems. But his own personal habits made it difficult and certainly very different for all of us who had to deal with him.

He is in many respects a very bright and interesting person. From a distance he's very

attractive. He said a lot of interesting things, which I in general kind of agreed with. But to deal with him personally was a difficult and strange experience. Not only for me, but I think everybody else who had to deal with him. He was difficult to pin down. When we talked about things he would continue to think out loud about possibilities and problems and so on, which is the way I have of thinking about things, but it's easy enough for me and for most of my colleagues to come back down to earth and apply our feelings to specific problems which we find in front of us. It's very difficult to get him to reach any specific conclusions.

YATES: So that you could then deal with whatever his conclusion was?

BEILENSEN: Right, so that we could then deal with. . . . Right. So what we ended up doing of course, eventually, was listening carefully and trying to be in sync with him as much as possible, so far as it also met with our own feelings about whatever matter was at hand, and then just going off and doing it as best we could on our own, presenting him with a fait accompli, which

worked more or less. It's just that he often never came to a specific conclusion, so we just had to come to them ourselves, for all of us.

But he was. . . . I'm trying to think of a correct word. He was kind of difficult to work with. I want to use a stronger word in a sense. It was kind of fun and interesting at first, but you got tired of it very quickly, because you can't go on and on thinking about this and that, and hypothesizing about things. We all do to a certain extent. As I said, I do a good deal more perhaps than other politicians. But you've got to get real after a short while and deal with whatever is before you. We found it very difficult to get him to do so, so we just had to kind of do it on our own.

YATES: I was going to say, how did you deal with that?

BEILENSON: Well, we just. . . . If you listen to him for a while you know more or less how he feels about things. Even though he can't come to any particular conclusion about this or that, having the same outlook he has let's say, I could myself come to a conclusion and we just did it. That's how we amended the bill.

That's what we did in the bill. That's all. And generally speaking, he didn't have any serious problems with it when it came back to him. It's just that if we relied on him to make the decisions, we never would have come to any conclusions. We'd still be looking at the 1975 budget bill today, twenty-some years later, not having agreed quite or decided what we're going to do with it. So we just did it. That's all. It came out fine.

He was a complicated person and one who was not terribly well suited to be a chief executive. I think he's more or less said it himself on a good many occasions. He's a contemplative kind of person. I think a seminary is a good place for him or he'd make a good philosophy student or teacher. He raises questions and likes to. . . . I mean, we all do, but eventually we have got to come back to earth and I don't think he likes to come back to earth.

YATES: Let me ask you about . . .

BEILENSON: He was annoying to deal with.

YATES: Was he?

BEILENSON: Yeah, because he just needed to make some

decisions. You had a time constraint, and you had some responsibilities, and you had other stuff you had to do in the legislature that year, so you had to come to some conclusions on the budget and then on some other things, and he was not terribly helpful in coming to conclusions. You just had to take the ball and run with it yourself to a certain extent. It wasn't a problem because, as I said, we knew in general how he felt about things and it turned out all right.

YATES: It sounds like it took a while though to . . .

BEILENSEN: I don't know that he ever changed. Yeah, it took a while . . .

YATES: To deal with his style of . . .

BEILENSEN: Yeah, but once we learned it we. . . . Like the second time we did it, in 1976, we didn't listen to him all that much. We knew he'd never come to any conclusions, so we went in and we talked, and we went out and we did what we had to do, without playing around with it. We used to go out for supper and talk and talk and talk, three or four of us, with the governor. It was interesting at first and fun at first, but after a couple of weeks of it and

after a couple of weeks of not being able to get home in the evening to my wife and children, you got sick and tired of it. He didn't have a wife and children to go home to. He slept on a futon or something on the floor, didn't care what time he went back, and all the rest of us did. We were regular human beings leading regular lives and he wasn't. That was the main problem, I think.

YATES: Let me ask you about committee assignments. You mentioned becoming chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee in 1970.

BEILENSON: That was earlier I think.

YATES: I have down that you were chair of the Public Health Committee in '67 and that this was reorganized . . .

BEILENSON: That may be. That may well be, but it was basically the same committee.

YATES: OK, because my question was, what happened so that it was reorganized?

BEILENSON: I don't remember at all. It may have been that welfare was a separate committee and we put them together. I do not remember. All I know is that I became chairman of, basically, the Health Committee and eventually the Health and

Welfare Committee, when Howard Way replaced Hugh Burns. And I, as one of his close friends and fellow plotters, was given that position, which, as I said earlier, Jack Schrade when he replaced Howard Way left me alone in. I remained as chairman of that committee for seven or eight years, until I became chairman of the Finance Committee.

YATES: How did that happen?

BEILENSON: The Finance Committee? That was very interesting. It came about largely because of the heavy-handedness of the prior finance chairman, who was Senator Randolph Collier from Yreka or Eureka--I forgot which one, I always get those two mixed up--who for many years had been the autocratic chairman of the Transportation Committee, but who had taken over, I think at Senator George Miller [Jr.]'s death, the chairmanship of the Finance Committee. To be frank about it, his way of doing things, which was perfectly acceptable in the old senate, was no longer acceptable. He was a bit of a holdover, I think, and probably was never terribly comfortable in his chairmanship of the Finance Committee, as he

had been in his old Transportation Committee, which he'd been doing for years and years and years.

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

BEILENSON: Anyway, Randy Collier always ran his Transportation Committee in a high-handed way, very high-handed way, and got away with it, partly because that's the way things were done in those earlier days, and even later on, it wasn't that important a committee to most people and most people didn't care an awful lot. But everything went through the Finance Committee. All the major bills eventually went through the Finance Committee. He kept getting himself in trouble, acting in the same autocratic, kind of non-democratic manner as chairman of the Finance Committee. For reasons I no longer recall, we defeated his budget bill that he brought to the floor in the middle of 1974. For some reasons which, as I said, I no longer remember the specifics of, but which involved some heavy-handed and outrageous things that he put in the bill, and the manner in which he handled it, we were able--several

of us who were on the Finance Committee and were upset at the way that its business had been handled--we were able to ignite enough opposition to several of the things that were being proposed to defeat the bill, so that we could, hopefully, amend those things out and come back with a clean and a proper bill.

In the process of defeating the bill, we also ended up toppling him. I don't recall exactly how it happened. I don't recall if he just sort of understood that it was his time to leave that chairmanship and quit, or whether we specifically pushed it or forced it. I don't remember at all. I don't know why I don't remember, but I don't. Anyway, he sort of fell with the bill. And my good friend Jim Mills, who was president pro tem of the senate then, and a couple of the other Rules Committee members chose me. . . . I think what happened is that in order. . . . When the bill lost we had to. . . . Let me back up for a minute.

YATES: Sure.

BEILENSON: What I think happened, although maybe we can check up on it somehow, was that the conference report on the budget was defeated. I don't

BEILENSEN: recall whether it was the senate version of the budget that was defeated or the conference report that was defeated. The conference report would have been the agreed upon compromise between the assembly and the senate. I think it may have been that, because once that was defeated, the three senators who had been on the conference committee could not serve again. When a second bill came out and a conference was again formed of three assembly members and three members of the state senate, the Rules Committee had to appoint three new senators to serve on it, [since] Randy Collier and his two earlier colleagues could not.

At that time I was chosen as chairman of the senate conferees, along with two other members: another Democrat and a Republican. When we met in the second conference, we ironed out the differences, got rid of the stuff that had upset people, and got that bill passed on the floor. Subsequent to that--perhaps it wasn't till the beginning of the next year, perhaps it was just subsequent to that--the Rules Committee appointed me to be chair of the Finance Committee in place of Mr. Collier. But

BEILENSEN: I don't recall exactly the steps that were taken.

One of the reasons I think that they made the change was that, historically, up till that point, and through the first conference committee--whose report we defeated on the senate floor--the conference committee met in secret and a lot of deals were made quietly and secretly. The press was not allowed in, the public was not allowed in. One of the things I did with my colleagues' assent when I was chosen as chairman of the senate conferees for the second conference committee on the budget was to open the doors of the conference committee and invite in anybody who wanted to come: the public and the press. Everybody was upset about this at the time. They thought the press would be hanging around and bothering us and all that. But it turned out to be exactly as I thought it would be. After the first several hours or so, and everybody's so excited about being the first allowed in to listen to a conference committee, they soon learned what we had already known, that these things are drudgery. They're long, they're complicated,

BEILENSON: they're largely uninteresting as you go item by item through the entire budget. Hundreds of items, a few interesting, most of them not. One by one the members of the press and the few members of the public who had wandered in started wandering out, so that halfway through the first day we were left alone again, even as if we had closed the doors. The second and the third days there was nobody watching. I mean, almost literally. Some of the more interested press would come in for a while and wander out, or if they knew something was coming up they'd come in and listen, and so on.

But for the public, for the press, and for many of the other members, the change was so significant to them. . . . Where everything had been done in secret before. . . . We were always being criticized by the press for meeting in secret. All of a sudden we had opened the doors, we had come out with a better result than we had before, and we had pleased everybody, including all the editorial writers, by opening the process up to the public and to the press. I think that gave a lot of momentum to the idea that perhaps some changes should be

made in committee memberships. And from that, I think, flowed my being chosen . . .

YATES: As chair?

BEILENSEN: As chairperson of the Finance Committee, because people. . . . We educated people to. . . . They saw that this was a good way to run things. It came out better than it came out under the old process. The senate looked better and in fact the whole legislature looked better for having done it this way, and the results were better, so why not see if we can't do that again the next year?

YATES: Let me ask now about legislation you carried. In 1967 Governor Reagan signed the Therapeutic Abortion Act, which you've referred to previously. You discussed the bill in some detail in your previous interview, but I was wondering, how did you end up carrying that bill?

BEILENSEN: Well, it was just fortuitous. I mean, I came . . .

YATES: Explain it to me.

BEILENSEN: Well, I'll do it as best I can, because even shortly after the fact it wasn't all that clear to me how I had stumbled upon this

controversial issue.

YATES: Right, because you did talk about in the campaign and . . .

BEILENSON: But in 1962, when I first ran for the legislature, abortion was not an issue in any way. I don't recall ever having mentioned it, thought about it, or confronted it. It just wasn't there. It didn't exist. It was not a public issue in those days in any case, in this or any other state. I got elected in 1964, I go up to Sacramento, and somewhere, somehow in the first few months up there I ran into some people with whom I became friends, who were also friends with another assemblyman, Jack Knox, John [T.] Knox of Richmond, whom they had persuaded two years earlier to introduce the first attempt to liberalize the abortion laws in California.

Mr. Knox, an extremely competent and bright assemblyman--was through his many years there--introduced the bill, had some hearings on it, the bill was . . . I'm not sure it was even defeated. I don't think there was any real strong push made to get it passed out of committee. They had some interim committee

BEILENSEN: hearings on it and apparently in early 1963, which is just the time I first arrived in Sacramento as a new member of the legislature, [Assemblyman Knox] had some doubts about whether or not he wanted to reintroduce it.

He came under some fairly strong pressure from his local Catholic prelate. I think it was a bishop, but I'm not sure, and someone with whom he was close personally and whom he was fond of, and he had a fairly large Catholic constituency. It wasn't that he was worried about it, or afraid of losing or anything of that sort, but he had a lot of other things on his menu and this made for a lot of difficulties for him. I think he kind of suggested to his friends that he wasn't all that anxious to carry it again.

I went to Jack Knox, I think at the behest of some of these mutual friends, and told him of my interest in being supportive of it. They had to explain the bill to me, the first time in my life I confronted, to a modest extent, the problems of abortion being virtually entirely illegal in California and elsewhere throughout the United States. It seemed

obvious to me that the law ought to be liberalized, to a modest extent at least. I told Mr. Knox that I supported his bill, would be happy to cosponsor it when he reintroduced it, or whatever. The long and the short of it was that sometime in April or May of that year the understanding became that he didn't really want to introduce it, he'd be perfectly happy if I went and introduced it, and I did. I mean, it was that simple. It was an issue that I had never confronted, or thought about, or known a thing about before. I never had any experience with it the way some of the members had had in their earlier days. I just stumbled into it, as it were, because of some people telling me about it and my offering my support for what I thought was going to be someone else's reintroduction of his bill. So it ended up that I introduced the bill. That's how it happened.

YATES: OK. Then you did mention that in your campaign that became an issue.

BEILENSON: Exactly. I introduced the bill in 1963. We had hearings on the bill in the assembly Committee on Criminal Procedure. We had, as I

BEILENSON: recall, a long evening hearing on it. And for the first time, really, it started to become. . . . It was just the very beginning of its becoming a public issue, where the press would start talking about it a little bit and so on. It's very difficult to believe, or to realize, that in those days even the major, mainstream papers like the Los Angeles Times never printed the word "abortion." This is 1963. They always used some euphemism such as "illegal surgical procedure." I didn't even know what they were talking about when they were writing articles on my own bill. But seriously, it wasn't a topic of conversation. It was not a political issue. Nobody talked about it. Nobody talked about it. That's why it wasn't an issue.

And you discovered soon after introducing the bill, and starting to hold hearings, and going around and giving talks and speeches around the state, as I did over the next four years or so, that it was a very interesting issue to a great many people. The most astounding thing. . . . Astounding is the wrong word. But the most interesting part of the

BEILENSON: experience of carrying the bill was how you discovered, over a period of time, how many lives the problem of abortion had touched. I would give a talk in Eureka, or San Mateo, or wherever--I gave a lot of them around the state between '63 through early 1967--and people would come--women, of course--would come up to you after the talk and tell you about their experience with abortion. Their mother had one, they had one, their college roommate had one and lost her life having an illegal abortion. These were all regular, upper-middle-class, perfectly responsible people, who either they themselves or their friends or their relatives had done something which was a felony.

But what was so astounding to me. . . . I had no idea in the world how many people it affected, although you could figure it out when you start thinking about it, when you understand that there probably were somewhere in the neighborhood--nobody ever knew--of a million abortions being performed on American women each year, almost all of them illegal. It clearly had to affect people, an awful lot

BEILENSON: of people. But the amazing thing is that almost every woman you ran into had an abortion story. Herself, her sister, her college roommate, her mother, her aunt, whatever. I mean, everybody. . . . When you think about it, people had to face these problems of unwanted pregnancies, and the terrible choices they were forced to make in those days: whether or not to have an illegal abortion.

I realized very quickly that this was a huge, sort of underground issue, which affected enormous numbers of people, but had never been a public issue before. It became one slowly and then more quickly over these four years, four and a half years, that we were carrying the bill, when for the first time there was sort of a public platform for people to discuss it. It became relevant as a topic of conversation, because there was a bill in the legislature that proposed to liberalize the circumstances under which one could have a legal abortion. It just exploded as an issue. It was very, very interesting.

It was clear to me once I had some experience with it--I didn't understand it at

BEILENSEN: all when I introduced the bill, as I've made clear, I hope--that there was an enormously strong sentiment out there, an overwhelming sentiment for some changes in the bill, in the law. They started taking polls within another year or two, which showed even amongst Catholics in California two-thirds of those asked believed that we should liberalize our abortion laws. Among non-Catholics it was 75 or 78 percent, depending on what group or whatever. Because in those days all abortions basically were illegal, with the single exception of when its performance was necessary to save the mother's life. And you could almost always bring a woman safely through a pregnancy in the sense that she wouldn't lose her life, even though other dire effects might occur.

So it turned out to be a huge sleeper of an issue. And as you suggested a few minutes ago, it became a big issue in my own reelection campaign in 1964, and a very good issue for me, which I didn't realize at the time. I mean, I was not really worried about it and I believed so deeply in it I wouldn't have trimmed my

sails to any extent anyway. But despite a lot of campaigning on that subject by my opponent and the attempt of registering a lot of voters outside of Catholic churches in our district because of this specific issue, I won reelection, as I think I said earlier, by a much larger majority than I had won election the first time two years earlier, and with more votes than any other Democratic or Republican assembly candidate in Los Angeles County in that year of 1964. I was--a little facetiously, but at the same time seriously too--able to go back to my colleagues and say, "I've discovered this is really an issue that people care about and it's not going to hurt you. In fact, it's going to help you, assuming you agree with my position on this thing. Obviously, if you don't for moral reasons, or whatever, that's understandable. But you don't need to be afraid to be supportive of liberalizing the abortions laws. Overwhelming numbers of people back home, wherever you're from, support it."

YATES: Right. In the case of a bill such as this one. . . . You received a lot of mail both for

and against, and I saw this one as I was looking in your materials. It made me start thinking. . . . How much of an impact would the public have in your decisions regarding a bill? You talked about people coming up . . .

BEILENSON: Me? Or . . .

YATES: Yeah, just in general. I use that as a specific example because you had a lot of mail, and you just talked about women coming up and talking to you. I was just wondering how you weigh that kind of . . .

BEILENSON: Well, that's a good question, but there are a lot of questions in it, and it's answered in many different ways, and of course it's answered differently by different legislators. Yes, we're elected public officials and we pay a lot of attention to our mail. And depending on how courageous you are or how idealistic you are or how committed you are to doing what you believe is the right thing, it affects you more or less, and it depends on the issue. Now, anytime you get a couple of hundred letters from constituents of yours expressing strong feelings about a particular piece of legislation that's before you, it worries you,

BEILENSON: especially if you were. . . . Let's say if they're against the bill. Let's say you're somebody who doesn't know a lot. . . .

Forget me for the moment: I was carrying the bill, and I'm stuck with the issue, and I believed in it. I'm not going to be swayed at all. But you're one of the other thirty-nine senators, let's say, or seventy-nine members of the state assembly, whatever the case may have been. If you have no particular feelings about this issue, or no strong feelings. . . . You've had no personal involvement, you never thought about it much before, even as I had never thought about it much before until I introduced the bill. So it is sort of a new issue to you. It's the first time it's arrived on your plate, as it were. If at the same time or shortly thereafter you get three hundred or four hundred letters from home from people who are adamantly opposed to any liberalization of the abortion bill and you don't feel strongly about it yourself, then obviously you're likely to feel far more comfortable--unless you come from a terribly secure district--not offending those four hundred people and the members of their

BEILENSEN: families and other members of their church and everyone else who they threaten to talk to about your position on things by writing back and saying, "You know, I agree with you. This is a taking of a human life, and I'm very uncomfortable about it, and I'm not going to support Mr. Beilenson's efforts to liberalize the law."

If you've thought about it before and you feel fairly strongly that the law is, as I put it, kind of barbaric and uncivilized and needed to be changed at least modestly, and have the guts to stick to that point of view, you'd write back in a noncommittal kind of way. You don't usually like to write back and say, "I disagree with you. I'm going to vote for the bill." You usually say, "Thanks for your thoughtful discussion of this. I'll keep your points in mind if the bill ever comes before us for a vote, but it probably won't." That keeps people a little happy back home. And from some areas not all that many people wrote.

It's a good question, because I did have some good friends, who ordinarily I would have thought would be supportive of my efforts in

this area, who very early on got a lot of organized mail, mail which obviously was organized--and I'll come back to that in a moment, too--and immediately wrote back and committed themselves to voting against the bill, which really annoyed me because I thought more highly of these particular individuals. It really bothered me that on something like this, where underneath they did not disagree with me, that they'd, just for popularity's sake back home--and these were people who I thought would have no great problem getting reelected even if a couple of thousand people got mad at them for their vote on our abortion bill--committed themselves to vote against it and made my job very much more difficult. Especially in the senate where you need twenty-one votes and there's so few.

YATES: Right. A smaller group.

BEILENSON: It's a really difficult matter. Now, the whole question of how one reacts to mail--these days to faxes and E-mail and everything else--varies hugely from member to member. I mean, those of us who are grounded and secure and believe in certain things obviously pay a lot of attention

BEILENSEN: to the mail from back home, and care about it and are far more comfortable when we feel that we are reflecting the majority of views of people back in our districts. But you also come to learn that on any particular matter you only hear from a very tiny fraction of the people back home. Sometimes, if you're sensible, you understand [that] this is reflective of the general mood, even though only a couple of hundred people wrote. If people write and say, "Look, I feel really strongly about crime. We've got to impose higher sentences on criminals because the streets are really unsafe, unlike the days when I grew up here in Los Angeles," or "the San Fernando Valley," even if only two hundred people write and tell something like that, you know that everybody feels that way. Everybody, no matter what their politics are, because people feel less safe than they used to. If two hundred people, however, write you and tell you, "I really want you to vote for this insurance bill because it's good for the people," and so on, and they're all form letters, and you know they've all been dictated

BEILENSON: or prepared for them by the insurance companies for which they work, and you know that the other three hundred thousand or four hundred thousand voters in your district don't know or care about this bill and it would be better for them if the bill were defeated, then if you're a decent legislator you don't commit yourself to vote for this bad bill. You just answer noncommittally and do the right thing. You vote for your constituents, the great majority of them.

So it varies greatly. If there is a concerted letter-writing effort, which obviously has been organized by some group or groups. . . . In this case it was mainly the Catholic church. In other cases it's the NRA [National Rifle Association] or the pro-choice or pro-life people, whatever, so-called. You understand it and discount or weigh it, knowing that it's coming from an organized group and it probably represents X number of people and you just have to decide yourself whether you want to do the right thing or whether you agree with these people or not or what the political consequences will be.

In this particular case, since it was an issue of first impression for many members, the fact that early on they got a lot of mail about it in some districts made our job a good deal more difficult.

YATES: I was just struck--I'm sure this happens in many cases, and of course you would deal with it differently each time--by the amount of mail that you received . . .

BEILENSON: But you've got to. . . . I only can tell you how I react to it. We have a lot of members who are chicken. You know, they get a lot of mail on something, they like nothing better than to write back a form letter to each of the four hundred people saying, "I agree with you completely. I'll never vote for that bill." Or, "I will vote for the bill you asked me to vote for," because it makes four hundred people and their friends and their family back home happy. It makes you feel good too. If you're a decent legislator, however, you first think about the issue, and decide what you think is the better way to go, and don't get yourself committed just because a bunch of people have written to you.

YATES: Right. During the time you were in the state legislature you were very successful in getting your bills passed. I was wondering if you would give an example of a bill that you were unable to successfully shepherd through the legislature and maybe explain the pluses and minuses of how the process worked.

BEILENSON: The first bill that pops into mind was a bill that really was not mine, in a sense. It was a bill which was originated by my good friend and colleague, then in the state assembly, Alan Sieroty, who first introduced the Coastal Protection Act,¹ which eventually ended up in the whole coastal management. . . . Coastal Commission. California Coastal Commission. Anyway, he introduced the bill over in the assembly side, pushed hard for it, and was unsuccessful in getting it out. And I, over in the senate side, at that time as chairman of the senate Finance Committee, introduced a companion measure and pushed it when he lost his. . . . We gave him first shot at it over in

1. The California Coastal Act of 1976.

the assembly, then he lost his.

BEILENSEN: I then, interestingly, lost mine for a number of reasons, one of which was, I'm convinced, that that was the year I had declared that I was running for the United States Congress. Members who would have ordinarily perhaps been a little more circumspect about opposing a bill that the chairman of the senate Finance Committee was carrying, knowing that I would not directly or specifically get even with them as it were, but you know, wanting to stay on my right side by being supportive of as much of my own legislative efforts as they could, because they'd want friendly treatment from me as chairman of this most important committee in the senate in the future themselves. . . . [They knew] I wouldn't be there in the future.

We lost the bill in the senate--I think in my own committee--by one vote or so, because of the same reason it was lost in the assembly by Alan Sieroty. [It was] because of a peculiar combination of opposition, which neither of us was able to overcome. Both the builders and the developers, the real estate interests, and

BEILENSON: a lot of business interests in general on the one side, and on the other the labor unions. More specifically, [it was] the construction unions, or at least the labor movement, which was responding to the pressures applied on their colleagues in the movement from the construction workers who feared--foolishly, I think, because there are plenty of things always to be built in California, and if you limited construction to a modest extent along the beaches I don't think there's any perceptible loss of jobs amongst construction workers statewide. . . . But be that as it may, that was the argument they made and they were able to pry loose a couple of liberal Democrats on my own committee, on the senate Finance Committee, to vote against the bill. So I lost. It wasn't my bill in a sense. I was picking up something that Alan was unable to get out of his side for the same reasons. I don't know if that's the best issue I can come up with.

I eventually succeeded with most of the things I tried. One always had problems at first because there was some specific interest

BEILENSON: which was opposed to it, and usually it just took a lot of patience on one's part to outlast the opposition as it were, and to. . . . I learned a lot of patience. Most of my consumer protection bills, some of the better ones, some of the larger ones, took four or five, six, eight years to get passed. You had to keep trying over and over again. Every year you educated a few more of your colleagues to what you thought was the need to do such a thing, and won over more friends, and to a certain extent sometimes outlasted the opposition.

In a couple of instances, I think specifically with respect to the Funeral Reform Act,¹ the principal lobbyist for the funeral directors died finally. Not that they didn't have somebody to take his place, but he happened to be a very effective one. I was still there, and finally in 1970 I was able to get the bill through because the opposition had died, literally, or at least its representative

1. S.B. 1278, 1971 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1027.

there. Its original and most effective representative. Also, by then I had acquired some chits and things, and I think I had finally educated some of my colleagues to the need for such a bill.

YATES: You just mentioned the U.S. Senate race and I wanted to ask you why . . .

BEILENSEN: No, no, no. I didn't mention it. I mentioned that we lost in 1976, the coastal protection bill, because I was running for the U.S. Congress.

YATES: Oh yeah, I'm sorry.

BEILENSEN: That's OK. I ran for the senate in 1968.

YATES: I wanted to come to the campaigns during the time you were in the senate and I was thinking about that already, even though I know that you were saying 1976. So in 1968 you ran for the U.S. Senate in the primary.

BEILENSEN: I did.

YATES: And why did you run?

BEILENSEN: Because I was disheartened and dismayed by the war in Vietnam largely, and wanted there to be someone running statewide in California for whom people could vote to express their disappointment or their opposition to the war.

BEILENSON: My feelings along those lines started getting strong toward the end of 1967. The senate seat at that time was held by Tom Kuchel, a moderate Republican. This was just prior to the time that Eugene [J.] McCarthy got into the presidential campaign, long before Senator Robert [F.] Kennedy got into to it, which was I guess after Lyndon [B.] Johnson announced that he was not going to run for reelection for president.

By the time, finally, the primary of June of 1968 came along, there were plenty of alternative ways of expressing one's feelings about the Vietnam War by voting for Eugene McCarthy or for being involved in the Kennedy campaign for president. And by that time, shortly before the filing date closed earlier in the spring, Alan [M.] Cranston, who had served as statewide controller in California, also filed for U.S. Senate, and I obviously had no prospects at all of defeating him. When I first got in, it looked as if nobody among the Democrats was going to run, nobody serious, and certainly nobody was going to say very much about the war. So I thought I would be serving

a useful function even if I didn't end up winning. And of course at that time, there was nobody in the world--I, or anyone else, any other Democrat--who could have beat Tom Kuchel. It turned out eventually by the time filing closed we had Alan Cranston in, talking a little bit about the war, not so much as I, and these two presidential candidates talking a lot about it, so that people had a couple of other major venues to go to, to express their feelings.

What also happened, of course, very interestingly on the Republican side was that Max Rafferty, either still or close to that time the superintendent of public instruction in California, quite a conservative Republican, entered the primary against Tom Kuchel, and eventually defeated him by one hundred thousand votes.

YATES: Right.

BEILENSON: And was then, of course, easily defeated by Alan Cranston. As, I think, he would have been easily defeated by me if Cranston hadn't run. I just think that the Republicans threw away the senate seat. If Kuchel had been

renominated nobody could have defeated him, including certainly Cranston, certainly me as well, or anybody else I think, because he always, as Earl Warren had in earlier years, got a lot of Democratic and independent votes in the general election. Once Mr. Rafferty had been nominated by the Republicans, I think there was no way that they could have held on to that seat, so long as voters had any kind of decent alternative to vote for. They had Mr. Cranston. If they didn't have him, they would have had me.

I ended up raising and spending, I think, \$33,000 in that campaign, which was not a lot of money for a statewide campaign in California. I got about somewhere between 23 and 24 percent of the vote, came in second out of the five people running. I lost to Mr. Cranston by, as I recall, about nine hundred fifty thousand votes, and that was it. I was running, of course, in the middle of a senate term, so that I did not have to give up my seat, and I remained of course a member of the state senate for several years thereafter.

YATES:

Now, you ran for reelection in 1970 and 1974.

BEILENSON: Yes.

YATES: How did those campaigns compare with your previous ones?

BEILENSON: I have almost no recollection of either of them. And I think the truth of the matter is that once I won the Democratic primary in 1966 for this new senate seat, thereafter there was neither a general election, certainly not a primary election, that posed any difficulty whatsoever. I don't recall if we spent any money in them. We did virtually nothing. I guess we did a mailer or two, which probably cost a few thousand dollars. But the truth of the matter was, it was perfectly obvious that this was a secure democratic district and . . .

YATES: Even with. . . . In '74 it was reapportioned.

BEILENSON: Yeah.

YATES: That didn't change things dramatically?

BEILENSON: No. I don't recall the extent of the reapportionment, but it wasn't great. Even in 1970, when Mr. Reagan was winning by so much, I guess I ran for reelection that year too.

YATES: Although the margin was much smaller between Jesse Unruh and Reagan than it had been in '66.

BEILENSON: That's right. In '66 I had no problem getting

elected when Mr. Reagan was winning overwhelmingly against Pat Brown. In 1970 I had no problems getting reelected, nor did other Democrats throughout the state, as I recall. I don't think Mr. Reagan had much in the way of coattails at all by 1970. Perhaps he didn't have much in 1966. But in any case, the state senate campaigns are not worth discussing even. We put on little campaigns. We sent out a couple of mailers. If someone reminded me I might remember the names of people who ran against me, but they were campaigns in name only.

[Interruption]

YATES: I wanted to ask you next about the role of the governor in office. Let me ask you about the governors who were in office while you served in the state legislature. Now, Edmund G. Brown was in office when you were elected to the assembly and I was wondering, how would you assess Brown's role as governor?

BEILENSON: Well, it's a good question and one. . . . With respect to Pat Brown, I'm not so well qualified as perhaps with the others. I arrived there in the middle of his two terms. That is, I was

BEILENSON: first elected as he had just been reelected for his second term as governor. It's his second term, and--we may have said this before somewhere--as is almost always the case, I think not only with governors but also with presidents, second terms tend not to be so successful as first terms for a lot of reasons, some obvious, some perhaps not. Governor Brown had a wonderfully successful first term, in which all of his major public projects were initiated and got underway. For all the usual reasons, partly because most of the big things that he had in mind were accomplished during his first term and he didn't have all that many left to do, partly because as a second term governor one loses a little bit of one's popularity. . . . Also perhaps because he had to deal with a state assembly under Jesse Unruh that stood up to him more during the second term than before. His second term, when I was first there, was one in which the governor himself seemed not to be as overweening a presence as he may well have seemed in the prior four years, before I got there.

In fact, this is not terribly relevant but

BEILENSON: we talked some time ago about my experience during my first two years in the state assembly serving as chairman of the task force on workers' compensation. The only time that I've ever had a personal call from a governor asking me to do something was from Pat Brown either in my first or second year there. I was serving as chairman of this task force. The governor. . . . I had mentioned earlier, too, that the labor people were not all that happy with the way things were coming out because I was siding too often in their view with the two Republicans, having had some experience as to how the workers' compensation worked in reality. The labor people got to the governor and asked him to ask me to be supportive of some particular proposal of theirs and to vote it out of our task force. I think that's what it was, sort of along those lines. I was called off the assembly floor one day to the phone booth just outside, and it was the governor calling. He said, "Tony, I understand that this proposal is coming up before your task force next week, or in the next meeting, and I hope very much that you can find your way

BEILENSON: free to support the labor people and the other Democrats on this thing." I remember telling him, "With great respect, Governor, this is an issue I know a great deal about--I've practiced workers' compensation law for the past two years--and the proposal you're speaking of, though I'm sure it's well-intended, and as I know, your support of it is certainly well-intended, makes no sense at all." I gave him the reasons why, or why it was not fair, or whatever. "And it's not something which I can support. I'm really sorry. I hate to say no to you, but I just believe deeply it's a foolish way for us to proceed and I don't want to do it." So he was fine about it. He said, "Well, thank you very much. It was good talking to you."

I don't know if it's fair for me to say now, as I do, that it was not difficult to say no to him. Maybe if he had been Earl Warren, or maybe if he had been Pat Brown three years earlier and we were in the process of passing the water plan, or setting up half of the university system, and all the other things that were being done--he was, as I said, an

overwhelming political presence on the Sacramento scene--I would have thought twice before saying no. I like to think I would have stood my ground then too. But he was not a strong personality then, as I suspect he must have been earlier.

Now, he was a very nice man, and most of us worked well with him. But as I also think I've said earlier, I tended to agree more with Jesse Unruh when they had arguments about various things, that I thought Unruh was coming from the right direction more often than the governor was, although there were a couple of times when I sided with the governor's position over the speaker's position, somewhat to the annoyance of the speaker.

YATES: You did talk about working with Ronald Reagan during the Welfare Reform Act. But again, I was wondering, how would you assess his role as governor?

BEILENSON: Well, again, one can look at it in an awful lot of different ways. In a sense--I mentioned this just earlier today--in a sense he loses a bit in. . . . That's not the right word, but he's diminished a bit only because, by contrast

BEILENSON: to his leadership as president, his leadership as governor was not nearly so overwhelming or spectacularly successful as was his presidency. I don't think he'd mind my saying that. It was far more important when he was president than when he was governor. He was a popular governor, especially in the beginning. Again, he only defeated Jesse Unruh by five hundred thousand votes the second time around, which I think suggests that he wasn't quite so popular by then as a lot of people always thought he was. He was not successful--I don't think he tried awfully hard, I don't think it was really possible to do so--in appealing directly to the electorate over our heads. So the legislature--all the various members of it and the various power centers in it--dealt with him as they've dealt with other governors. You know, you make some deals, you make some agreements, and you do what you want in the last analysis, and if what he wants makes some sense and has some public support you accede to at least a certain extent. He had the difficulty, of course, of dealing with a Democratic legislature most of the time he was there, and wasn't able to do

BEILENSON: quite so much as he would have liked to have done. He had the difficulty also, as I may have mentioned earlier, of having in the state legislature a good many Republicans who were a good deal more moderate than he, and who often sided with us Democrats when it came to proposals of his, which many of us thought might be harmful to the poor or to the downtrodden, however you might want to state it. I mean, even on the welfare issue I had a lot of support from moderate Republican friends of mine for talking a more moderate position, a non-punitive position, on welfare reform--or at least a less punitive one, I think that's the proper way of putting it--than the governor's proposals were, those proposals by his staff.

So he was fine to work with, his office was good to work with, Ed Meese was good to work with. They kept their word, they worked well with you. I think he was probably in some respects an easier governor to work with than perhaps Pat Brown was, if only because he delegated almost everything to others, most of whom were pretty decent folks, albeit very different in their philosophy than most of us

were. Ed Meese, whom I got to be very upset with when he served as attorney general of the U.S. in later years, I found to be extremely forthcoming and honest and easy to deal with. Not easy in the sense that we could always reach agreement, but when we did he kept his word and I liked him very, very much when he served as Mr. Reagan's chief of staff, or whatever his correct title was.

I think all of us had a relatively easy time, perfectly cordial and decent time, working with Mr. Reagan during his eight years in office. He looked particularly good when members later on had to deal with Jerry Brown, who was complicated and difficult to work with, as I suggested a little bit earlier, even for those of us who were most anxious to work with him if at all possible. He made, as I said, in retrospect, Governor Reagan's eight years look better than they did at the time.

YATES: How do you assess Jerry Brown?

BEILENSON: I can't be quite fair to him because I was only there for two of his eight years and I don't know how much he changed thereafter. I don't think he changed an awful lot. I think he

BEILENSON: became a little less. . . . What's the word? I'm reaching for a word that eludes me at the moment. It's not talkative, but. . . . I think he probably got down to business a little more quickly in subsequent years than he did those first couple of years when he liked philosophizing and theorizing and was hard to pull back to earth. From what I understand, from Democratic colleagues of mine. . . . I left at that time for Congress in the very beginning of 1977. Many of my Democratic colleagues who were left behind in the senate and state assembly did not have a particularly good time working with him.

It's always. . . . It's interesting. This happens at the federal level as well, just as a general matter of interest. It's both easier and more difficult when you have a chief executive of one party and majority in the state legislature of the same party. Obviously, if they're of different parties that creates other kinds of problems. But you often represent different points of view on the political spectrum. The governor, let's say, may be either more conservative or more liberal

BEILENSON: than the legislature. The governor always has his own point of view, which is inherently somewhat different on some issues, at least, from the majority point of view of legislators of his own party on those same issues. And in a sense, the whole function of a chief executive, which is to lead, to preach, to push various things, is somewhat different from the constitutional position of a legislature, which is to slow things down, talk about things, figure things out, give things a chance to percolate and to be discussed, and so on. There's always an inherent friction between the two. If you're of the same party there's something particularly unpleasant about it, because a governor would expect, "They're Democrats as I am. Why don't they just do what I want?" Well, we don't want to just do what he wants, because we don't think he's right, or we think he's rushing too quickly, or he's going off in the wrong direction. Because of that, relationships between a chief executive and a legislature of his own party often sour and are difficult. It takes a lot of understanding on the part of the legislative

BEILENSON: leadership, as well as of the governor or the president, as the case may be, and the folks around him, to work well together.

A governor, especially if he comes from something other than politics as Mr. Reagan did. . . . As Jerry Brown did really, too. Sort of. He'd been secretary of state, but that was out on his own and didn't deal with the legislature. A governor, if he's not a former legislator, tends to resent the legislature. He just got elected by X number of votes, by all the people in the state, or in the country if he's president, and he wants to do certain things, and who are these people to say no, especially if they're members of his own party. It creates a lot of friction and ill feeling. All governors have a hard time adjusting to the fact that they've got to get along with the legislature and compromise a bit and get these people to go along with what he wants to do. Obviously, that's what the writers of our constitutions, especially the federal constitution, originally envisioned, and in my opinion it works very, very well, even though it's hugely annoying to newly

elected chief executives.

YATES: Well, what you're saying. . . . It's interesting because I think from the number of state government interviews¹ I've read, I've noticed the comment that frequently they felt that way about Ronald Reagan when he came into office.

[End Tape 5, Side B]

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

YATES: I was just saying that I frequently read that they [state government interviewees] felt that way particularly about Ronald Reagan when he came into office. He didn't really have a clear understanding of the relationship between the executive branch and the legislative branch, or his own understanding of how it would work.

BEILENSON: That's exactly true. That's exactly true. And in a sense, looking back, there's no reason to fault him. Anybody--he was an actor--whatever you were, even if you were a businessman,

1. California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

BEILENSON: whatever. . . . You get yourself elected governor by a million votes, you're hugely popular, you've defeated a popular incumbent, or someone who had been a popular incumbent, you get to Sacramento, and you find you've got to deal with these eighty assembly people and forty members of the state senate, and you had hardly heard about their existence before you arrived. You've had no experience with this kind of thing. Or if you've run a business before, or if you've been in charge of anything, you just did what you wanted to do, and here you can't do what you want to do. You can sign these things into law, but you've got to get these two bodies of men and women to pass them first. You've got a big job involved in nudging them along and urging them to do as you wish. Mr. Reagan. . . . As I said, it was perfectly normal and understandable when you think about it, but he was almost surprised to find out he had to deal with a legislature, the two houses of the legislature. You can forgive him for that. He was new to the process entirely. He hadn't been involved in politics. Jerry Brown should have known a little better

and. . . .

YATES: Yes. From what I'm hearing you say, it's not totally unique that the governor comes into office and has a hard time relating with the legislative branch.

BEILENSON: I'm sure not. But the other thing, as we discussed a few minutes ago, is that a governor, when he or she is first elected, tends to be more popular, on a bit of a roll or whatever, and this happens with presidents. Everybody always comments on this. They've got a bit of a honeymoon period. If they're bright about this, if they're smart about it and have good people around them, they should understand that they can get more done in the first six months to a year and a half, two years, of their first term in office than they ever will be able to do again. Except for specific things, you know, come up with welfare reform the second time around, or there's a war, there's whatever, a depression or something. You get some support for your positions on that.

It's a difficult thing, unless. . . . In fact, when you think about it, as I am now

BEILENSON: forced to at the moment, unless you're a former legislator, as I said a few minutes ago, and have had the experience of this, it must be difficult for all newly elected chief executives--presidents, governors, whomever--even if they were involved in government before as an attorney general. . . . Pat Brown had been a state attorney general, but he'd been running his own Department of Justice. He didn't have to deal with the legislature much except for the annual appropriations for his department, and that was understandable. But here you've got some policy proposals and you can't just get them made into law because you want it made into law. You've got to persuade the legislature to go along. And in the process, even if you're hugely successful, you're going to have to trim your sails a bit and accede to some changes in position and certainly some changes in specific language and direction that various members of the legislature, or various portions of the legislature, insist on.

It's aggravating as hell, I'm sure, especially if you think you're right, as I'm

sure you do, and especially if you're being held up by some difficult person like Senator [Jesse] Helms, who makes it difficult for presidents of either party. There were members of the senate and speakers back then who made it difficult for presidents of either party to. . . . They needed the speaker to get their stuff through, but in return they had to accede to some things that the speaker wanted and you have to learn to . . .

YATES: To deal with it.

BEILENSEN: To deal with that. Exactly.

YATES: Well, let me shift here a little bit. First, the state budget. How did the budgetary process change over time?

BEILENSEN: It didn't change a huge amount over time, except that. . . . I like to think that when we were in charge of dealing with it, it was done in a more thoughtful and certainly, as I had suggested earlier, more open way than it had before. Our group of people, who were first elected to the assembly in 1962 and then to the state senate in 1966, were lucky in one sense. In one other sense it might have been fun to have been there earlier, but by the time we

BEILENSON: arrived, we already had--certainly in the assembly and beginning in the senate--a fairly modern and up-to-date legislative portion of the government.

I say that specifically with respect to the budget. I'm sorry to say I don't know when the legislature first established the position of legislative analyst.¹ But it was a good many years, I guess, or at least several years before our arrival in 1963, early 1963. We were particularly blessed then and for a good many subsequent years by the fact that the original--I think he was the original, or certainly immediately after the original--legislative analyst, a fellow named [A.] Alan Post, was still the legislative analyst of the state. An extraordinarily competent and decent man, and one who had won quite properly the complete respect of all of the legislators, of whatever political persuasion. So much so that people really had a very difficult time arguing

1. The legislative analyst position was established in 1941 and was originally called the legislative auditor.

BEILENSEN: with him in public before the Ways and Means Committee on the assembly side, or the Finance Committee on the senate side, as to what the potential outcome of particular bills or portions of the budget might be if in fact they were enacted into law. It made for a very professional way of handling the budget, much more so than almost--I'm sure--any other state had at the time, perhaps still do, and certainly a more rational way of dealing with the budget than the federal government had then, or even has now.

We also had the advantage in the state, as I guess you have in almost all states, of having the annual budget in one bill. The governor, even as the president of the United States, submits a budget at the beginning of each fiscal year by introducing his budget bill, which as I alluded to earlier was usually authored, introduced for him on his behalf, certainly in the senate, by the chairman of the senate Finance Committee, and in the assembly by the chairman of the assembly Ways and Means Committee. We worked off of the governor's budget bill. Before we started to work on it,

BEILENSON: sometime partway through the spring or early in the spring, it had been submitted. . . . Again, I'm sorry that I don't recall when our fiscal year at the state level began. I think it was July 1 or so, because I think we had to have a budget by the end of June. But whenever it was, earlier in the previous year, the governor's various agency heads would put together their budgets, submit it through the governor and his own finance director, and have it ready for publication at the beginning of the year.

Immediately thereafter, it would be gone through item by item by the legislative analyst, who worked in a bipartisan manner for the legislature, so that we had an expert of our own and his corps or his cadre of authorities in various fields looking at the various portions of the budget. When it was presented to us by the governor's people in whatever month we first took it up--March, April, whenever it might have been--we had then comment immediately thereafter by the legislative analyst sitting there, this respected figure and his colleagues arguing

BEILENSEN: with what the governor's people said, or agreeing with what they said, or pointing out various problems or alternatives, and so on, to us. We were thus enormously fortunate, and so were the people of the state clearly, that we dealt with this multi-billion dollar budget. . . . Which at that time--still is I guess--was I think the seventh largest budget in the world, after six countries which have larger budgets than our one state. I think it was up to \$24 billion by the time I became chairman of the committee and it's in the \$60 billion or \$70 billion range now. I'm not sure. But this enormous budget at least was being professionally analyzed and presented to us appropriators of state moneys in a very professional and aboveboard way. We were able to make sensible and legitimate--I think--decisions as to how one spent money.

Among many other things, the analyst would on his own--sometimes at our behest and sometimes at his own behest--suggest that such and such program was working well or not working well, or such and such department was doing its job as well as it ought to, or in the

alternative was not doing its job as well as it ought to. It gave us a basis upon which to make decisions and choices as to how we were to spend our money, more in some areas and less in other areas and so on. It made our job a great deal easier than it otherwise would have been. Clearly we were able to do it in a far more aboveboard, professional, and sensible, rational manner than were legislatures of most states or the Congress, even to the present time.

YATES:

Let me shift here again to the subject of the structure of the legislature. I know in your previous interview you talked about the change from the part-time legislature to the full-time legislature. In 1972, voters approved Proposition 4,¹ which changed the legislative session from one to two years. How did you perceive that change? Or how effective was it?

BEILENSON:

I think it made a huge amount of difference. It was mostly pluses and a few minuses. The only minus I can think of offhand, aside from

1. Legislative Reorganization (November 1972).

BEILENSON: the theoretical one of wanting a part-time legislature or a citizen legislature--we always have this argument with respect to the Congress too--and not one which is basically full-time so that you have to become more professional legislators and do nothing but be legislators. . . . If you're a full-time legislator you can't practice law back home, or go back to your business, whatever it might be. When you were part-time you could do both. There's something very appealing, and very nice, in a very real way too as well as this theoretical way, about a citizen-legislator. You did not grow away from your roots, or your community, or whatever it was that you were involved in before, that you continue being the kind of person you were and involved in whatever your profession or business, or whatever it was, and at the same time go up to the capitol at Sacramento for a few months each year and play a hand in running the state and the state government.

On the other hand, the truth of the matter is, even if one doesn't like to accept it, you couldn't do that anymore. The state was too

BEILENSON: big, the problems were too many, even though one could argue the government may well have gotten itself involved in a lot of areas it shouldn't have or more deeply in some areas than it should have. Nonetheless, you have a state of--I don't know how many millions of people we had at that time--probably close to twenty million or so anyway, and a huge budget, and a lot of different functions which people were pushing the state to become involved in. There was no way you could handle it properly on a part-time basis, so that we needed to become a full-time legislature, even as the Congress has needed to become a full-time Congress, even though there are some downsides to that.

One of the modest downsides to the state legislature was that we were no longer able to hold a lot of what we used to call interim committee hearings around the state, which were still being held my first four years when I was in the state assembly. We all found [them] both fun and interesting, and very worthwhile. We'd go down to San Diego, or up to the coast, or to San Francisco. We'd have a good time in

BEILENSON: the evening, go out for supper together, or whatever, visit some of the museums, or go to a concert, or just have a nice social time too, usually with our spouses. But at the same time we'd be able to hold two or three days of in-depth hearings on some major subject matter, away from the crush and the pressure of the capital, when we're all just hanging out together as friends and fellow legislators in the off-season. They served a very useful function.

When we went to a full-time session we came back and we were faced with the pressure and the crush, the rush of daily legislative life. . . . We processed and heard and voted on an enormous number of bills each year, but we were seldom able thereafter to sort of set aside some more quiet, contemplative time to discuss for even a full day someplace away from Sacramento the intricacies of some proposed major piece of legislation that one of our colleagues was presenting to us, and which we wanted to think about and deal with and discuss amongst ourselves, and then come back in the beginning of the next session and pass in one

form or another. We lost some of that, but I think we had to change, even as all kinds of other changes have occurred in more modern life. It's not a terribly pleasant or nice one, but it's one which was a reaction to the times and the requirements put upon us as legislators, and we just had to become full-time people.

YATES: Once this Proposition 4, which changed the sessions from one to two years. . . . How does that fit into the picture?

BEILENSON: Well, other than personal regrets that I and others may have had, such as the ones I've just expressed, which were very real but which most of us were realistic enough to understand, it just didn't fit anymore with the realities of governing a huge state such as this. It's still the reality in some smaller states. I think New Hampshire and some of the other smallest legislatures. . . . That's a big one actually. Their state assembly has four hundred and some members, or some nonsensical number. But some of the smaller states, I think, are still able to deal with their modest array of problems with part-time legislatures.

BEILENSON: We just accepted the fact that we couldn't anymore. And, for most of us, despite the fact that we didn't have time to deal with some of these issues in a more careful and thoughtful way, as we used to, nonetheless all felt that it was better. Most of us felt that it was far better to be there full-time.

What came along with a full-time legislature, of course, also was a higher salary. As I recall, we went from \$6,000 a year--I think we used to get \$500 a month--to \$16,000 a year. It doesn't sound like a lot, but it made a lot of difference to many of us, because many of us thought that there was an awfully big conflict of interest in remaining as practicing lawyers or whatever we might have been doing and tried not to do it to any great extent. Most of us didn't, but it was awfully hard to support your family on \$6,000 a year. Your own secretary was making more money than that. For the first time we had sort of a living wage, on top of which we had the very few thousand dollars' worth of car and gasoline provided for us. We were, I think, able to breathe a little more freely than we were

before, which also was a good thing for the health of the public.

YATES: OK. I guess I'm still wondering about this shift in 1972 though, that was going from. . . . My understanding is then that the bill, instead of it being introduced that year and . . .

BEILENSEN: And die.

YATES: Then either dying or whatever that year. Right. You're extending to two years. How did that impact what you were doing?

BEILENSEN: That's the system which, you quite properly point out, we've had in the legislature ever since, and which, I guess, for an awfully long time has been the system in the Congress, because [they] have lasted for two years. You can introduce a bill in the first or the second year of the Congress and it's still around the second year. If not acted upon in the first year, it can be acted upon later. On the whole, it's a better system. It's also on the whole a necessary system, as things become more complicated and you're dealing with more issues. You have a very hard time dealing with a larger number of issues in less than a year,

which is what you were faced with in the first place. As I recall--please correct me if I'm wrong--we retained a system in which we had an annual budget. The budgets, as I recall, did not go for two years.

YATES: No, I don't think so, but I'd have to check my notes.

BEILENSON: I think we confronted the budget every single year, even as we still do in Washington, which I happen to agree with, because it's. . . . It's not necessary to talk about it here, I guess, but there are difficulties in dealing with it only in a biennial way. But because a legislature has to spend so much time each year dealing with a budget--in the case of the state legislature with a big budget bill and its various component parts, in the case of the Congress with the thirteen individual appropriations bills--it crowds out, if you're just dealing with a single year, all of the other potential major pieces of legislation that you might want to deal with or to pass upon or to talk about, and make some decisions on. It's very much better to have a two-year period of contemplation, as it were, in

BEILENSON: decision-making, and to have time in which you can hold committee hearings on other pieces of legislation, which can extend perhaps past the assembly in the first year and go over to the senate, and then you can take care of it in the senate in the second year.

I don't have a lot of recollections about how that changed for us, or whether it made it an awful lot easier or better or not. I think it must have been better, because it didn't force you to crowd a huge number of bills into each session, which there was just no way of your handling in a sensible or rational manner. Even with the new session, with the two-year session, we still ended up, at whatever our cutoff date was for passing bills from one house or the other, or for finally completing passage of bills at the very end of the legislative year, with literally hundreds of bills on our calendar over the final two or three or four days of session, and dealing with an awful lot of them in a manner which was awful really, to be quite frank about it. We were always just frightened to death, those of us who thought of ourselves as good guys, at

BEILENSEN: what kind of bad things were slipping by in the wee hours of the final two or three nights of the session, when bills were popping out of committees all over the place and getting access to the floor by unanimous consent, and getting onto the consent calendar in some instances because some of us hadn't had the chance to read them thoroughly and flag them and require full-fledged debate on them, so that no matter how you ran the system it didn't run nearly so well as it ought to.

And you also learned. . . . I hate to admit this. Some people made a practice of it, some of the rest of us only invoked it every now and then when we were both feeling a little underhanded and also feeling that it was our time to get our good bills through. You realized that it was often good to put off a hearing for your bill till toward the very end, so that it was mixed in with a lot of other bills. . . . For example, let's say I had a. . . . Forget something big like the abortion bill or welfare reform issue, which people were going to notice anyway, but if I had a nice little moderate consumer protection bill, which

BEILENSEN: I thought was wonderful, which always ran into a lot of opposition. . . . If I brought it up in March or April, [when] it was one of three or four bills on the docket that day, then everybody could focus a lot of attention on it, pick it apart and so on, and I might have a very difficult time getting it out of committee and off the floor. If it came in on the Business and Professions Committee calendar on the last date that that committee could meet and put out bills in early June with thirty-two other bills, which was literally the case, and we had to deal with and vote on thirty-two bills that day, then you could sort of hurry the matter along and the members of the committee didn't want to spend any real time looking at it with any great particularity and whatever. You had a better chance of getting stuff through often at the end of each session than you did earlier on. It was also true on the floor, unhappily.

One of the wonderful things about--if I may say so, self-serving as it is to say it--the two years that I served as chairman of the senate Finance Committee was that since all the

BEILENSON: major legislation had to go through that committee, we very carefully. . . . We, meaning I and the three staff people that I was entitled to at the time, would go through very carefully all of the bills which were referred to our committee. Most of them were re-referred from other committees through which they had originally passed, and then they had to come through our committee because there was some potential fiscal effect of their passage. Therefore we had to look at those fiscal effects in the Finance Committee. We very carefully looked at all of those bills and put aside, at the end of the year, all the bills we thought were bad and didn't let them out on the floor. In earlier years and, I'm afraid, in some subsequent years an awful lot of stuff came out of the Ways and Means Committee on the assembly side and the Finance Committee on the senate side which only the lobbyists were interested in and the members of the committee hadn't done too careful a job of looking at. For two good years at least, members who felt the same way as I did about things could feel pretty comfortable that their senate Finance

BEILENSON: Committee at least did not put onto the floor
things that ought not to have been there.

[End Tape 6, Side A]