

Michael Armand and Eli Wolcott (editors)

*The Highway to Nowhere:
Recollections of Newport Beach "Freeway Fighter" Howard Rogers (1976)*

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The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH).

Project: Pacific Coast Highway.

O.H. 5251.

Oral Interview with Howard Rogers, conducted by Barry Lee,

April 8, 1976, Newport Beach, California.

Introduction

The oral history transcribed below belongs to a collection held in CSUF's Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH) titled "Pacific Coast Highway." The interview with Howard Rogers was conducted by Barry Lee on April 8, 1976, in Newport Beach, California. This interview is 1 hour, 4 minutes, and 4 seconds long, and is archived as a digital recording/audio file at COPH (see "Copyright Advisory" below). The verbatim transcript edited here was prepared in the fall of 2023 by Michael Armand and Eli Wolcott.

Born in Los Angeles in 1920, Howard Rogers grew up in Newport Beach and was first elected to the Newport City Council in 1966. Rogers was an influential leader in the 1971 fight against the expansion of the Pacific Coast Highway into a large freeway. The freeway was intended to cut through multiple beach cities such as Long Beach, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, and Laguna Beach, and an immense interchange was to accommodate the greatly enlarged Pacific Coast Highway and cut deeply into Corona del Mar and Back Bay. The planned freeway sparked great debate among the residents of Newport Beach, who were concerned about the impact of a freeway on their community and the environment. This interview reveals how Rogers and other "Freeway Fighters" sought to stop the project. Rogers details the activities of the "Freeway Fighters," who tried several strategies to block the freeway before finally putting forward an amendment to the city's charter that would allow the residents of Newport Beach to decide on the freeway themselves and nullify its construction. Rogers and the "Freeway Fighters" faced ruthless politics, and they engaged in heated conflicts with numerous entities, including neighboring cities such as Costa Mesa, government agencies like the California Highway Commission, corporations such as the Irvine Company, and other Newport community members who wanted the freeway. Despite these challenges, Newport residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of the amendment in a special election, and the expansion of the Pacific Coast Highway was defeated.

This interview with Howard Rogers will interest historians looking at the development of Newport Beach and Orange County, particularly those interested in the interaction between local elected officials, their constituents, and California's state government. Researchers interested in California's freeway system and the impact of car transportation on California communities will also find this interview valuable. Rogers's recollections provide insights into the early years of the environmental movement, as he describes the environmental awareness sweeping the nation at the time. Rogers was elected mayor of Newport Beach in 1976 following this interview but passed away six months later due to a heart attack.

Only identifiable individuals, locations, and technical terms have been referenced in the footnotes, usually when they first appear.

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The primary-source edition published below originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's Department of History.

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Verbatim Transcript (O.H. 5251)

LAWRENCE DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: Howard Rogers, Sr. (1920–1976) [HR]

INTERVIEWER: Barry Lee [BL]

DATE: April 8, 1976

LOCATION: Newport, California

PROJECT: Community History Project

TRANSCRIBERS: Michael Armand and Eli Wolcott

BL: This is an interview with Howard Rogers for Cal State University Fullerton community history project by Barry Lee on April 8th, 1976, um, 03:45 p.m. or thereabouts. Okay, um, (pauses) Mr. Rogers? If you don't mind, I can —

HR: —Or Howard, either one. —

BL: —call you Howard?

HR: Yeah.

BL: I'd like to begin by having you, um, relate your recollection of the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway,¹ through Newport Beach.²

HR: Well, the, uh, freeway was proposed and was pretty much locked in concrete, if you will pardon the expression, uh, before I came on the city council. Uh, I came on the city council in 1966, and, uh, there was great debate roaring through town as to the routing of the freeway, and, uh, at that stage everybody was arguing whether it should go up on the bluffs or whether it should be right down on Pacific Coast Highway, and, uh, there were, there was a small force of people in town trying to stop the freeway entirely. Uh, the mayor, uh, at the time I came on the council was a man by the name of Paul Gruber,³ uh, who fought, uh, very vigorously, uh, but ineffectively because he didn't have the numbers behind him, uh, to stop the freeway. The, uh (pauses) – we tried three times in Sacramento⁴ to g— after I got on the council, uh, to get bills through the legislature to abolish the freeway in Newport Beach. And, uh, on our third try, we finally, uh, got Laguna Beach⁵ to wake up and Huntington Beach⁶ to wake up and Long Beach⁷ to wake up that a freeway on Route 1, Pacific Coast Highway, through all of those towns was, uh, really going to be a disastrous, e— effect. We were just gonna divide them in two and, and, uh, create more problems than it was going to cure. Um, all three times we, we lost in the legislature we, we would win it in the Assembly, and then we would lose it in the— before the Senate Transportation, um, uh, Committee.⁸ And, um, (pauses) there was a lot of infighting, uh, in town – the Irvine Company⁹ wanted the freeway very, very badly. Uh, if you build a shopping center, you want to have a pool of people from three hundred and sixty degrees. Uh, they built one on the coastline, which gave them only a hundred and eighty degrees total of clientele. So, they felt that the, the actual decision of the costal freeway, the Route 1 freeway was gonna be the, the spring salvation of the shopping center. Um, the, uh, fi—the fighting got bitter, and after we lost the first time up in the sand blades, (inaudible 00:03:04–00:03:40) they said, “You know it's, uh, (pauses) a luck – lucky thing we are a charter city.¹⁰ So,

¹ Pacific Coast Highway, a.k.a. California State Route 1.

² Coastal city in Orange County, California.

³ Newport Beach city council member, mayor (1964–1968).

⁴ State capital city of California.

⁵ Coastal city in Orange County, California.

⁶ Coastal city in Orange County, California.

⁷ Coastal city in Los Angeles County, California.

⁸ California State Senate committee handling transportation-related issues.

⁹ Private real estate development company, founded 1864.

¹⁰ City governed by its own charter rather than solely by general law.

we could take this issue to the people, and we can have it written in the charter—as, uh, there'll be no freeway. And then we'll have to—then we can watch what the state will do.” And that sure got people throughout the whole city carrying petitions, um, and I think there was about an eighty-five percent voter turnout and the, the, uh, vote against the freeway was about eighty-five percent of those, uh, voting. The thing that really brought about the complete (pauses), uh, taking out of the freeway was a, uh, council meeting—which, I don't recall the year—but th—they were trying to decide where to put the on and off ramps up in the Corona del Mar¹¹ area. And two homeowners groups got to fighting very heavily on that, and my comment after they had all presented their petitions, and then all presented their arguments was as long as you, all you people can carry petitions so well, why don't you carry one petition. Let's get rid of this whole damn thing. And they did; they got, I think, more signatures—there are, there are people in town and, uh, against the freeway. But that would just be a rough overview of it. There are a lot of little details, some funny, some not funny but, um—

BL: Right, (pauses) how about those details?

HR: Well, uh, there was a group of—which, if you were in—interviewing other people you, you'll hear about, called the “Freeway Fighters.” Um, the, the humor there is that the “Freeway Fighters” consisted of probably seventeen people. Uh, yet, uh, everyone in town, including the Irvi—Irvine Company, thought it was a very well-oiled piece of machinery and a very high, very highly organized group, and it wasn't, uh, really at all. It was a group that met once a week. We'd meet every Monday at, uh, seven o'clock and, uh, put—tried to put together the programs that we could. Towards the end, when we were really getting going, and we were having the election, then this nucleus grew. So, that at this point, if you asked people in town were they a “Freeway Fighter,” they'll tell you “yes,” but there were, there were only about seventeen peo—people that, that kept that image going for four or five years, so—(pauses)

BL: Yeah.

HR: Trying to think of some of the other, uh, (pauses) incidents that were, um, (pauses) but, hey, I think, I think one of the, the in, in the historical background of the, uh, demise of the freeway, um—the president of the Irvine Company at the time, they were struggling so hard to get the freeway, was a man by the name of Bill Mason,¹² and Bill Mason was a very brilliant (thump) engineer. And, uh, he simplest way to move traffic, to an engineer, is to, is to build a freeway. Um, the, um—I even personally went up and, and, um, practically got down on my hands and knees to ask him

¹¹ Neighborhood in Newport Beach, California.

¹² William R. Mason (1920–1973), Irvine Company president (1968–1973).

to at least take a neutral stand on it because every time we would go to Sacramento, we could see their bloody footprints ju – uh, just ahead of us. They called them the green footprints, uh, because we felt we, we were bought out in Sacramento, and we felt that the Irvine Company was doing it. Um, subsequently, um, the Irvine Company, uh, capitulated, and, and B – Bill Mason was quite sick at the time, uh, the way he was ge – he was getting to have angina attacks and, and he finally had a heart attack and died, and, uh, Ray Watson¹³ became president of the, um, company, and Ray is not being an engineer but being a, an architectural type, a – uh, an urban planner type, uh, had more respect for the integrity of the communities that we have now and, uh, he finally, uh, flung in, uh, behind us and, and, uh, and helped us. So, in the long run, when the Irvine, uh, when the Irvine Company saw that it was going to be a lost issue anyhow, the – they, they, they jumped on the ba – uh bandwagon. I think it was mostly because of Ray Watson and, and, uh, his difference in attitude, uh, being a, a planner rather than an engineer. (pauses) Uh, and there's a picture up on the wall there, uh, during one of the de – council debates, while I was patiently waiting to be heard (pauses), and, uh, the press of course trying to, to trying – and they, they, they kept on trying it. The press was all for it, the, the, uh, *Daily Pilot*¹⁴ was all for the freeway, and anybody who was against the freeway, uh, uh, got slashed pretty badly at almost every edition of the paper. Um. (pauses)

BL: Yeah, I wonder if you might wanna elucidate on that, I have been reading those papers –

HR: – Uh-huh. –

BL: – and, and their comments about you and I wondered, um, you know if you might want to elaborate a little bit on the *Daily Pilot's* treatment of –

HR: – Oh they, they, they –

BL: – on the issue. –

HR: – they loved to attack me and, uh, uh, (pauses) – when Don McInnis¹⁵ was elected to council, which was two years after I was on it, 1968, uh, Paul Gruber left the council at that time and, uh, (pauses) we were the only two who were anti-freeway.

[00:10:03]

HR: Now, they always treated Don very nicely, but they always loved to, to twist the knife in my back, which was fine, it – you know, it, uh, uh, being a hard-fighting ma – math teacher, why I, uh, uh, I, I rather enjoyed the, the battle back and forth, and, uh, the, the man specifically at, at the, the *Daily*

¹³ Raymond “Ray” Watson (1926–2012), Irvine Company president (1973–1977).

¹⁴ Newspaper published by the *Los Angeles Times*.

¹⁵ Donald A. McInnis (d. 1993), Newport Beach city council member (1968), mayor (1972–1976).

- Pilot* is a man by the name of Tom Keevil¹⁶ and, uh, uh, I know Tom. I enjoy talking with Tom. We, we, we've never, uh, uh, we, we were never enemies through this thing. Um, (pauses) because the—wh—wh—what would happen, it would always neutralize, uh, he'd stab me in the back, but I would win so—
- BL: —(laughs)—
- HR: —there is no reason for, for either to be mad. He got his lick in, and so did I. And the—and now in the long run of course the, the, the whole battle is over, and I, and I think probably the most laughable thing about the, the whole affair is that, uh, if we had done nothing to fight the freeway—we'd done absolutely nothing—the Department of Transportation of the State of California¹⁷ would not have the money to build it today. (laughs) But it, it took this, this town through a, a, a, a great emotional run, and I, I think it, I think it did more for the city, uh, that scrap and got more people interested in the, in local government, uh, than any other issue ever could have and, uh, it—it's, that is extremely beneficial because then you get citizen input, uh, which is extremely valuable sitting on the council. I'll have been on the council, uh, ten years, uh, (pauses) next week. And, uh, I've always had, uh, my phone registered in the phone book and, uh, I love to get calls—
- BL: —Tremendous.—
- HR: —'cause, uh, people come up with some of the damndest ideas. And sometimes with the—sometimes it's just the solution you're, you're looking for, but you're working within the constraints of, of what you feel are, are government operations or bureaucracy and, uh, it helps.
- BL: Yeah, um, (pauses) you pretty much covered my, my second question, but I'd like to go over it anyways and—
- HR: —Alright.—
- BL: —maybe it would spark something, you know, from you. Um, and my second question is about the interest groups. You know, how would you characterize the different interest groups concerned with the freeway issue? And, um, I ask about Huntington Beach, Costa Mesa,¹⁸ Laguna, the *Daily Pilot*, Orange County,¹⁹ uh, the Irvine Company, various state agencies involved, such as the, um, California Highway Commission,²⁰ the Department—State Department of Public Works,²¹ State Legislature. Um, you covered, uh, pretty well the *Daily Pilot* and, um, uh, indicated, um, couple of things about the cities and the Irvine—

¹⁶ Mara Thomas Keevil (1928–1988), *Daily Pilot* editor

¹⁷ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), founded 1973.

¹⁸ City in Orange County, California.

¹⁹ County in Southern California.

²⁰ Primary state highway bureaucracy in California (1895–1978).

²¹ State-wide facilities management.

HR: – Yeah. –

BL: – Company. Uh, are there any oth—other things I’ve mentioned—

HR: – Alright, let’s talk about State Highway Commission. We went to Sacramento many, many times and met in other towns even out Central California—

BL: – Right. –

HR: – before the, the, um, (sighs) the highway commission and we had little or no, uh, sympathy from them. The—they, uh, they would listen to us, and we would get knocked down, uh, almost every time. Another faction very, very heavy in the freeway, uh, in here, right here in Newport Beach, was the Chamber of Commerce. Uh, which, if you’d look at their roster, you’ll find that, um, the biggest industry in to—in town is the Irvine Company. Therefore, most of the major, uh, committee slots are—

BL: – Um-hm. –

HR: – held or controlled, uh, by them. Uh, it, it seemed at first that, that Huntington Beach, uh, didn’t give a damn. Um, let it come. Uh, as a matter of fact I think they, they, they felt it would knock down a lot of that old stuff on the, on the ocean front and, and, uh, help clean up their town a little bit.

BL: Um-hm, yeah.

HR: Uh, Laguna Beach didn’t seem to, to realize the, the heavy impact that would happen the minute you got about, uh, twelve lanes coming into Laguna. So, the, the Highway Commission had—uh, said fine, they would pass the freeway behind Laguna Beach.

BL: Um-hm.

HR: Um, only problem then was that wh—when some of the ecologists and some of the, the, uh, the brighter people down there began to look at all the cut and fill that that would make in the hillside and, uh—so then they joined us, uh, a—and we had—we got a coalition of cities going and, uh—this is prior to our election, you know, here in town—but, uh, to try to get it and, uh, from, from the Highway Commission. Uh, the coalition never really got all that strong, but the fact that, that Long Beach put its foot down, um, (pauses) gave us a lot of strength, ‘cause Long Beach is pretty fair-sighted. I don’t know. Uh, we’re very, very lucky that we are a charter city, not a general-law city,²² (pauses)—

BL: – Um-hm. –

HR: – ‘cause with a charter city we have a, a—we can make a charter amendment as—just like the constitution. If we had been a general law city, we would have had to have done it through the legislature.

BL: Hm.

²² City that operates under the laws of the state.

- HR: And I think that was one of the key things with the fact that, uh, somebody, some very bright people got together in 1955 and, and, uh, chartered the city. But we had that –
- BL: – Um-hm. –
- HR: – power then.
- BL: What about Costa Mesa?
- HR: Costa Mesa, um, the, you – there are two people up there, Bob Wilson²³ and, um, um, Pinkly – a fella by the name of Pinkly – and, um, they were all for the freeway. And, uh, they would fight us at every turn of the, turn of the way. The – they would –
- BL: – Oh. –
- HR: – even lobby in Sacramento. Uh, the – they wanted that Pacific Coast Freeway an – and I think a lot of their, their logic was, was not logic but spite. Uh, there’s always been an antagonism, uh, between the two towns. Uh, in the early days, when I lived down here, why (pauses) – we always referred to Costa Mesa as goat hill and (coughs), excuse me, and they always referred to us as mackerel flats.
- BL: (laughs)
- HR: Well, well, uh, there’s, there’s always been –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – this competition an – and some of it’s been, uh, some of it’s been good, some of it’s been bad but, uh, with – I think that’ll break up both of them, uh – step down they, they had been on the city council since the start of Costa Mesa which was – gosh, I don’t know what year –
- BL: – Hm. –
- HR: – they been, they been on there almost twenty years –
- BL: – Hm. –
- HR: – on that city council, so they were entrenched pretty heavily –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – and, and uh, um –
- BL: (inaudible)
- HR: – and that made it tough, uh, (pauses) because the State Highway Commi – Commission would always say, alright, uh, you go back and fi – find out what all the towns around you want. And –
- BL: – Um-hm. –
- HR: – for years that was just impossible to do, ‘cause Costa Mesa obviously wanted the, uh –
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: – the, the freeway down here. They wanted some place for that traffic to bleed off – it’s gonna come down through the center of, of their town now. And, uh, (pauses) they, uh, not too long ago – well, I guess, two or three

²³ Robert M. “Bob” Wilson (1918–2004), Costa Mesa city founder and three-term mayor.

years ago – they, uh, they came up to the city council of the, uh, city of Costa Mesa, made a petition to the, uh, Department of Transportation to change the name of the Newport Freeway to the Costa Mesa Freeway.²⁴ And my, uh, comments to that when it came on our agenda was that, that would be neat. That would probably cut the traffic eighty percent on that freeway because who the hell wants to go to Costa Mesa? And of course this broke it all up again, and we started a fight with Donny²⁵ and Costa Mesa.

BL: Is it true that you were arrested after that?

HR: Yeah, did you read about that? (pauses) That was a clean-up job but it, it, it, it was beautiful it, uh –

BL: – Yeah.

HR: – yeah that was, that – they had a, a councilman up there by the name of Bill Sinclair.²⁶ He only served one term. He didn't get re-elected, but, uh, he wanted to do that just to kinda, smooth things over, (coughs) and it did.

BL: Yeah.

HR: And, uh, I'm sorry Bill isn't still there.

BL: Okay, um, this is really fine and just, you know, exactly what I'm looking for, um, what I, uh – in the interview. I have my next question. We oughta move on.

HR: Okay.

BL: Um, uh, who do you feel were the key individuals involved, including yourself, and what influence did they bring to bear on the issue? Now, what I mean is like who is on which side, and, and we've talked about cities and institutions –

HR: – Um-hm. –

BL: – but now how about, uh, uh, people? And it just so happens that I, I have a list of people here that is, is kinda randomly organized. And you might wanna look 'em over and – you know individuals that you see, or that you could remember as being real significant –

HR: – Alright, yeah. –

BL: – uh, maybe make, you know, some comments about them or, or even, you know, about your own role too, since I, I feel that maybe you're minimizing your own role in this.

[00:20:21]

²⁴ California State Route 55.

²⁵ Donald A. McInnis.

²⁶ Newport Beach city council member.

- HR: Okay, Fr—Fred Jennings²⁷ was a member of the, um, uh, State Highway Commission and um, theore—retically representing this area that we lived in, San Bernardino.²⁸ And, uh, he would not even give us the time of day.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Um, Governor Reagan,²⁹ um, didn't, didn't give us much help until after we had our elections down here.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Uh, prior to that we, we, we'd go—we'd get as far as the Senate and, uh, we'd get into the Transportation Committee meeting, and we would lose there. We, we always knew if we could get to the floor of the Senate, we could win it. And we always had a, a commitment from Reagan that he would, he would sign it.
- BL: Hm, right.
- HR: So, we had both things covered we just couldn't get out—we just got locked in the damn committee system up there in, in—
- BL: —Was that the Collier³⁰ committee?—
- HR: —Sacramento. Well—yeah, that's uh, Collier, um, head of that for years. He's, he's not, he's not head of the Transportation Committee now—
- BL: —Right.—
- HR: —but he was at that time. Uh, James Noll [?] was, was, uh, head of the department, um, we tried very, very hard through his office to negotiate our way out of the freeway.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: Uh, he was most cooperative, most help—helpful uh, Ban—Banford Franklin was the same way only, Banford Franklin couldn't, couldn't remember which side of the fence he was on all the time.
- BL: What do you mean?
- HR: Well, uh, he would come down here and, and uh, talk with us, and, and say, "Oh yes, we'll do A, B, C, D, E, F, and G." Then he'd get off s—maybe up in Costa Mesa or some place and say, "No, no, it's gonna be R, S, T, U and V."
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: And um, uh poor Ban got uh, caught by audience control and, and tha—that's a bad thing in the public, uh—
- BL: —Right.—

²⁷ Fred C. Jennings, chairman of the California Highway Commission.

²⁸ City and county seat in Southern California.

²⁹ Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), governor of California (1967–1975), 40th U.S. president (1981–1989).

³⁰ Randolph Collier (1902–1983), California state senator (1938–1976), chair of State Senate Transportation Committee.

- HR: –limelight. Uh, Bob Wilson had already mentioned, uh, he wanted to shove that freeway down our throat. Ed Hirth³¹ was mayor—this was a time in which we had a five-two majority that, that, that, uh, didn't care whether the freeway went through or not. Ed Hirth was mayor, and he was one of those. Uh, the two of us that, that opposed the freeway were, were myself and McInnis. Paul Grubert, who preceded Ed Hirth, was very much anti-freeway and worked very, very hard. Uh, Wally Koch,³² um, (pauses) was a, a real hard driving hard worker in, in the seventeen key people I was telling you about—
- BL: –Right. –
- HR: –in that, in that committee. Uh, Marshall Duffield,³³ uh, provided us a place to meet and um, whenever we needed funds, he would go out and raise the money, uh, to help fight this, help fight the freeway.
- BL: How did he do that?
- HR: Uh, well, he would, uh, he's, he's quite a money raiser. He, uh—if you're going into a political campaign and, and you wanna raise money you, you get ahold of Marshall and if he likes the candidate or if he likes the issue, uh, he had, you know, just innumerable friends he could call up and say, "Sa—send in two hundred, send in a hundred." Uh, —
- BL: –Uh-huh. –
- HR: –this type of thing.
- BL: Did being, being an all-American football player at SC³⁴ help out?
- HR: Uh, I, I think so, and also just being a hell of a nice guy, uh—
- BL: Uh-huh.
- HR: –he ca—he can't miss, you know? Uh. (pauses) Uh, Peggy Guinian [?], uh, up at the uh District Seven,³⁵ uh, (pauses) I think would have liked to help. But, uh, at the point we were working on this thing, he was, uh, very much looking—look forward to holding his job until retirement.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: So, it was hard to get anything out of him.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Uh. –
- BL: –He was part of the institution, the state institution.
- HR: Bill Hashimoto,³⁶ uh, was the one I felt sorriest for of all. Uh, he was the one that came, came down on—and, um, had to make presentations to the city

³¹ Edgar F. Hirth, Newport Beach mayor (1970–1972).

³² Walter Koch, chairman of the Citizens Coordinating Committee.

³³ (1910–1990), USC All-American quarterback.

³⁴ University of Southern California, private university, founded 1880.

³⁵ California Congressional District, includes Sacramento.

³⁶ William Hashimoto (1921–2019), served with the California Division of Highways.

- council. And, uh, he knew he was in kind of an antagonistic area and, uh, particularly the people who had come to the council meeting.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: And, uh, he was the one that conducted the, the public hearing on where the off-ramp should be up in the Corona del Mar area. And, uh, he finally walked outta there, uh, crushed that, that, that—at the fact that almost everybody agreed, “Let’s take the whole thing out.”
- BL: Um-hm, yeah, they seemed to have, at that point, some acceptance. But then when they —
- HR: — Oh, yeah. —
- BL: — changed the off-ramps for safety purposes, then —
- HR: — Yeah. —
- BL: — then they took up some more homes that they hadn’t planned on taking. This is all according to the *Pilot*.
- HR: Yeah, right.
- BL: And that kinda threw the thing the other way.
- HR: That, that very definitely did, because it, it, it, it, it brought about this type of awareness, that, uh—and, and mentioning, you know, uh. Good God, they all got maps, and they walk up there and say here’s my house and here’s the freeway, and you know, it was a, uh—the scale of those maps.
- BL: — Um-hm.
- HR: Bob Jaffy [?],uh, during most of this time, uh, was a traffic engineer, uh, (pauses) uh. (pauses)
- BL: This, uh, this list—and I don’t —
- HR: — Yeah. —
- BL: — I don’t mean to have you go down on everyone—skip over them if you feel that some are not, you know, so crucial —
- HR: — Bob, Bob —
- BL: — to the issue.
- HR: — Bob was not really crucial —
- BL: — Right. —
- HR: — to the issue —
- BL: — He was —
- HR: — and, uh —
- BL: — he was doing his job, and, uh —
- HR: — uh, Bob Burke,³⁷ uh, was fighting us because his, his representation was, was mostly up in the um, other area. Schmitz,³⁸ uh, always would carry the bill on the State Senate side, and uh, course, but we could never get it out

³⁷ Robert Henry Burke (1922–2003), member of the California State Assembly.

³⁸ John George Schmitz (1930–2001), member of the U.S. House of Representatives, member of the California State Senate from Orange County, California.

- the floor though. Uh, (pauses) Dennis Carpenter,³⁹ uh, — after Schmitz left and, and Carpenter became a senator — uh, he was the one — and he worked real hard once we had done our, uh, our vote down here, it had to be ratified by the State Legislature, the charter amendment. And he carried it on the Senate side and did a, an absolutely outstanding job for it, uh —
- BL: — He did.
- HR: Yes.
- BL: Sorry, uh, I got —
- HR: — During the freeway battle he was not with us.
- BL: — yeah, that's what I —
- HR: — No. —
- BL: — wanted to hear, that's —
- HR: — During the freeway battle o — o — once he saw what, what, what the, the democratic process brought forward, it made a hell of a lot of difference in his thinking 'cause he could count the votes, uh, at tha — at that point. (laughs)
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Okay? So, he did a very good job. Gor — Gordon Jones⁴⁰ was the, um — hell, I wish I could use the language I wanted to use, um (pauses).
- BL: Well, wo — feel free to use —
- HR: — He was —
- BL: — you'll have —
- HR: — he, he —
- BL: — you'll have a chance to edit.
- HR: — he was a freeway editor, uh, I mean, the freeway, uh, uh, fighter's most hated enemy. He had to carry out, uh, all of Bill Mason's edicts.
- BL: Hm.
- HR: And Jones is an engineer, uh. I meet with Gordon, now he is on one of our citizen's advisory committees, uh, on the rerouting of the, um, Corona del Mar Freeway⁴¹ and behind, uh, up inland. Uh, things have smoothed over, time has taken the sharp edges off. But, but, uh, there was a time I just as soon had (object falls) I, uh, uh, given him a black eye as I look at him and he me, too, you know. Just, uh, one of those things, but, uh —
- BL: Well, would you like to elucidate on that at all? Like I said, you will have a chance to edit the tape and —
- HR: — Well, (phone ringing) um (pauses). Can you hang on just a second?
- BL: Sure. (phone ringing) (tape stops) (tape restarts)
- HR: Well, Gordon had to make all the presentations, uh, to the council, uh, for the Irvine Company. Uh, and Gordon I, I, I think really sometimes, uh,

³⁹ Dennis Eugene Carpenter (1928–2003), member of the California State Senate (1970–1978).

⁴⁰ (1935–2019), engineer.

⁴¹ California State Route 73.

almost choked when he was there because he was, uh, having to, uh, use the philosophy of Bill Mason, where I don't think his own thinking ran concurrently. And, uh, it became fun to tie him up in knots, because when you sit up on that awesome stand up there, you, you can, you can, you can, you can level a person pretty easily. Uh, you hate to do it, but, uh, with Gordon, it got to be a pleasure after a while (laughs). But, uh, uh, Gordon was, was merely the – an execu – you know, uh, executing his orders from the Irvine Company, and, in retrospect, uh, he was doing hi – doing his job that he was being paid for. So, you know, you can't, uh –

BL: – Right. –

HR: – blame a man, uh, for that. Uh, he got de – crooked! He, he was the great, uh, he was on the council when I first came on. Then he lost the election, and then he tried to get, uh, elected back to the council, uh, a term later – or was it two years? He moved to do it. He was re-elected by a district uh, at any rate, he ran against John Store⁴² and, uh, in his platform was to keep fighting the freeway. And immediately after he lost the election, he, he, he went up and made a presentation – to the Department of Transportation – in favor of the freeway. (sighs) He is now, by the way, the mayor of Bishop, California.⁴³

BL: Is that right?

[00:30:22]

HR: That's right. He went to move to Bishop, uh, the, uh, – apparently there were three seats open on a five-man council and, uh, he garnered six hundred and eighty-eight votes, and th – so, he got on the council –

BL: – That's probably the majority. –

HR: – and got appointed mayor, yeah.

BL: And now he's mayor of Bishop.

HR: So now he's mayor of Bishop.

BL: That's a long move –

HR: – Yeah. –

BL: – from one side of Newport to the other.

HR: (laughs)

BL: (laughs)

HR: Uh –

BL: – Like I say, if you don't, uh –

HR: – you know –

BL: – don't want to finish that list, uh –

⁴² Newport Beach city council candidate.

⁴³ City in Inyo County, California.

- HR: – this is a neat list, but Carl Kymla,⁴⁴ uh, was on the council. He was one of those neutral at the time that, uh, the um—we were going to do, um, a charter amendment or, or a um, referendum. Uh, he, he led the group that wrote the argument in favor of the freeway. Um, (pauses) Don McInnis um, did not take part in that in or—in writing for it, but, but he remained fairly quiet, but he was, he was against—he, he wanted it to go to the people.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: Um, Bob Curci,⁴⁵ probably the hardest working guy in the, uh, in all of the, uh, “Freeway Fighters,” uh, he kept immaculate details of everything. He has every newspaper clipping—
- BL: – Yeah. —
- HR: – all in bound books, uh, all the way through and, and time charts and so on. Carroll Beek was a steady member of the seven—group of seventeen (object clatters) and she is a great, great woman. Uh, I can remember her, uh, from the times I was a little boy down here, and, uh, a very dynamic woman and, uh, boy she’ll sco—she’s just, just, just about eighty now, and one of the brightest minds in town—
- BL: – Right. —
- HR: – and, uh, she’ll call me up and scold me or, or praise me, one of the two. It’s a—it’s an equal force.
- BL: Carroll Beek.
- HR: Carroll Beek, yes, there are two R’s in it instead of one, if you wanna know. Uh, John Store [?]⁴⁶ got elected to the, uh, council, uh, primarily because he had been a heavy “Freeway Fighter” and had worked in—matter of fact, we—took us about uh, five days of hard argument to get him to run for the council. Uh, he’s, he’s stepping down this time, he’s not gonna run again. Um, Al Cook uh, who is county, uh, road commissioner, um, (pauses) was against us. Charles Hunt, I’m not familiar with that name. Uh, James Stoddard,⁴⁷ for—former mayor of, of Newport Beach, uh—
- BL: – Oh, excuse me I think, uh, perhaps my secretary mistyped that uh, on, uh, Charles Hunt, it’s actually, uh, Hart.⁴⁸
- HR: Oh, Charles Hart.
- BL: I—
- HR: – Okay. —
- BL: – yeah, he’s a —
- HR: – He’s a former Mayor. —
- BL: – former mayor —

⁴⁴ Newport Beach city council member.

⁴⁵ Presumably Robert D. Curci (1934–2023).

⁴⁶ Newport Beach city council member.

⁴⁷ James B. “Jay” Stoddard (1913–2003), Newport Beach mayor (1958–1962).

⁴⁸ Charles E. Hart, Newport Beach mayor (1962–1964).

HR: – Right. –

BL: – and I believe it was Hart and Stoddard and, uh, one other Lorenz⁴⁹ who uh –

HR: – Hans Lorenz, who, who, who, who uh, moved very hard to – even through the courts – to, to try to stop the referendum –

BL: – Right. –

HR: – and they couldn't do it.

BL: Right.

HR: Uh, what motivated them? I have no idea. Uh, I see Hans Lorenz every once in a while now, we're, we're good, we're good friends. I don't, I haven't seen Stoddard, Charlie Hart is, uh, is in a rest home up on, uh, Newport Boulevard, if he's still living. Uh, Lindsley Parsons⁵⁰ was very weak on the freeway. I've already, I've already covered Ray Watson and Bill Mason. Jack McFadden⁵¹ was an interesting character. He was from out of town, and he was one of, um, (cup falls) – uh, Marshall Duffield brought him on the scene. Uh, Jack has a public relations, uh, type business, and, uh, he runs political campaigns and so on. And, and, uh, Jack did a, a lot of work for Hoag Hospital⁵² –

BL: Hm.

HR: – and a cons – as a consequence for us – now, Hoag Hospital was opposed to the freeway –

BL: – Um-hm. –

HR: – uh, which would, uh, explain here, uh, I thought I sa – uh, Vin Jorgensen⁵³ –

BL: – Um-hm. –

HR: – who was very, very active in Hoag, and they were against it – um, Lorene Marshal [?], um, she was rather neutral. She, she didn't seem to, uh, be up – upsetting anything either way. Alf Orget [?], uh, scrappy little guy, uh, if you talk to him, uh, he'll tell you how he resolved the problem all by himself.

BL: How's that?

HR: Uh, well he thinks he, he was – he did it personally.

BL: Oh. Oh, is, is that, is that Mr. Orget's perception of the world? Uh –

HR: – That's right yeah, uh, that he, he was a scrappy little guy and, and he – by God – (mic noise) stopped the Department of Transportation.

BL: Yeah, yeah. (shuffling) Those are, uh, very interesting comments, and I appreciate you going through the list because the – well, one thing, it gives

⁴⁹ Hans J. Lorenz, Newport Beach city council member.

⁵⁰ Newport Beach city council member.

⁵¹ James McFadden, public relations business owner.

⁵² Non-profit clinical research center and hospital in Orange County, California.

⁵³ Orange County philanthropist (d. 1988).

- me a, a little different view of some of them as compared to my view of them through the *Daily Pilot's* eyes.
- HR: Uh-huh.
- BL: And then um, also, uh, to uh, — should help me as I go along to, uh, research, research further. Okay, let's step back up here, um, for, for another question on, on, uh, on my list and — well, I guess this one now you've already answered it too. Uh, you originated the idea of the local referendum, yeah?
- HR: — Right. —
- BL: I heard it was on the plane flight and now you tell me it was in the car —
- HR: — It was in —
- BL: — after —
- HR: — the car. Yeah. —
- BL: — in the car, after the plane flight —
- HR: — Right. —
- BL: — coming home. Um, what, uh, magical, um, uh, thing came to you out of the night? Was this, uh, uh, pure creativity, or was there, uh —
- HR: — Well, we, we were just sittin' and, and, uh, moping. (object clatters)
- BL: Uh-huh.
- HR: We moped all the way down on the plane and had as many cocktails as they'd allo — as they'd allow us and, uh, uh, we're still — we'd got — gotten our bags and got to the car in the, in the parking thing, and we were driving out, and it was just as we were going out the gate, that uh, I just got thinking, "God what can we do? What, what, what recourse do we have?" You know. And, uh, then I re — remembered back, uh, somewhere and, and probably around the tenth grade or eighth grade, uh, that the people have rights. And so I was sitting in, in the, the back seat, and I just lean forward and said, "We only have one thing left. We'll take this to the people as a, as a charter amendment." And that was with Bob Curci and Paul Ruret⁵⁴ at the time, and they said, "My God, it might work."
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: And then, uh — what do you — the next day we went arou — , we got, we got the petitions — got a lawyer to write up the petitions so they'd be correct.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: And we started to circulate those things, and we, we ran out of petitions so fast it was just amazing.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Everybody signed it. (coughs) (object clattering)
- BL: Uh, you mentioned those plane flights. I know that — from memory — there was a number of them, and, uh, from El Centro⁵⁵ to Sacramento a number

⁵⁴ Newport Beach city council member.

⁵⁵ City and county seat of Imperial County, California.

- of times, to Ventura⁵⁶ and uh, uh, were there any particular flights that you, uh, in—experiences, you know, traveling back and forth to various levels of state government, that you, uh, recall as, as being most memorable of uh, uh, of the battle?
- HR: Uh, no. Uh, no, no one in particular, but, but, uh, uh, every now and then they—the Irvine forces would be on the same plane that we would be on and, uh—
- BL: —Um-hm.—
- HR: —uh, we'd each be trying to convince each other of uh, you know—
- BL: —Yeah.—
- HR: —who was the righteous and who was the, uh,—
- BL: —Yeah.—
- HR: —devil in the, in the, uh, in the show. But, uh, uh, I can't recall any specific flights, that uh—
- BL: —Perhaps at, perhaps at twenty thousand feet, uh, after a few highballs,⁵⁷ there might have been a chance to, uh, have a freeway or to have an agreement of some kind. (laughs)
- HR: Yeah. We had to, we had to, (object clatters) had to be real careful because of, because of the Brown Act that, that we could, we, we never could have more than three council members (pauses) on the same flight.
- BL: Oh, is that—what is that?
- HR: So, the Brown Act,⁵⁸ um, (pauses) uh, states that, that, um, the majority of the city council cannot meet (object clatters) unless it is a, a, an announced public meeting. (object clatters)
- BL: Oh.
- HR: So, we have a seven-man council, so three of us can get together—
- BL: —Right.—
- HR: —fine—
- BL: —Right.—
- HR: —uh, and then we could call up the fourth one on the phone, you know, that—
- BL: —Yeah.—
- HR: —that, that's not in the law but, uh—
- BL: Not necessarily for your safety, but a political thing.
- HR: I—it, it's a, it's a good uh, it's a good act.
- BL: Goes both ways.
- HR: Keeps it from going in the back room and, and, uh—
- BL: —Yeah.—

⁵⁶ City and county seat of Ventura County, California.

⁵⁷ Mixed alcoholic beverage.

⁵⁸ 1953 California law guaranteeing the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative entities.

HR: –taking votes and making decisions, uh, where the people don't get a chance to –

BL: –Okay. –

HR: –argue.

BL: Uh, I have another question for you. Um, did your stand on the issue hurt your chances for a higher political office? Uh, and is this a valid question? And I would like to recall one time that, I think, I remember reading that, uh, you were possibly considering, um, running for someone in Batum's [?] office, if the reapportionment was right, and Batum –

HR: –Yeah. –

BL: –moved on –

HR: –Um-hm. –

BL: –and there was some –

HR: Yeah. (object clatters) Uh, yeah that, that's when they were going to carve one more district.

[00:40:05]

BL: Um-hm.

HR: And, it looked like it might carve in a way that, that, it – in other words, I wouldn't have –

BL: –Right. –

HR: –run up against Batum in a –

BL: –Right. –

HR: –that's, uh, building a –

BL: –There would've been another opening.

HR: Yeah, so uh, uh, yeah, I, I, I think that would have, uh – at least with the press – held me back considerably. Uh, at least the *Daily Pilot*, uh, and of course what the *Pilot* does the *Times*⁵⁹ is there, too, uh –

BL: –Yeah.

HR: –they're one and the same. So, uh, yeah I think that, I think that probably would have hurt my chances, uh, as it turned out it, uh, it didn't matter anyhow. Uh, the, uh – another thing too that the, um – my freeway stand and my, uh, scrap with the, um, uh, *Daily Pilot* has probably, uh, prevented me from being mayor, 'cause the council selects the mayor.

BL: Right.

HR: Uh, I think they'll help me get it this time, next week.

BL: Yeah. Now –

HR: –I think –

BL: –some –

HR: –the sores have –

BL: –Yeah. –

⁵⁹ Reference to the *Los Angeles Times*.

- HR: – have healed, uh –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – and time has passed and uh, but, no they have knocked me and, and knocked me around and, and, uh, that, that, that’s, that’s just part of it –
- BL: – Right, yeah. –
- HR: – you get pretty thick skin, uh.
- BL: Yeah. I have some personal experience with that being in a coaching circle.
- HR: Ye – right.
- BL: And, and not myself directly, but close friends of mine, and, and, uh, they can – the *Daily Pilot* in particular can do a job on it.
- HR: We got wiped, and, and –
- BL: – Oh. –
- HR: – and, it was vicious!
- BL: Yeah, and, uh, I don’t mean to digress into talking about Orange County sports but, uh, these, uh –
- HR: – That’s a neat topic, I love it.
- BL: Yeah, yeah. Well, we’ll get to that one –
- HR: – (laughs) –
- BL: – that is my next research project (both laugh). Okay, um. Let’s see, can you describe your feelings when you learned that the Pacific Coastal Freeway had been defeated? And a little, um, footnote to that is, when did you feel like, uh – as, um, they used to say about Barry Goldwater⁶⁰ – in your heart, uh, that you knew that it was defeated? You know, what point in time, and how did you feel at that time?
- HR: I, I, I would say the morning of, of the election. (object clattering) I just knew it because the, the people were coming out in numbers like we’d never had ‘em before, and, uh, I had been talking with people, uh, ‘round this neighborhood, and, uh, up in Corona del Mar and up in the Newport Heights.⁶¹ They were throughout the city and, and, uh, gosh, hardly anyone was gonna – (sighs) (pauses) gonna, uh, vote to let that freeway be in there.
- BL: Hm.
- HR: And, I, I, I think the, the most awesome feeling I had through the whole thing was when the results were in, and the freeway was killed. And, Don McInnis and I had talked about this many, many times, uh, “God, wh – what are we gonna do now to move the traffic?” And that responsibl – uh, responsibility was laying pretty heavy on us and we’re working on it, uh, continuously, uh, as we, uh, we, we felt that, “Gee, th – that big win of knocking the freeway out –
- BL: – Yeah. –

⁶⁰ Barry Morris Goldwater (1909–1998), U.S. senator, 1964 Republican nominee for president.

⁶¹ Neighborhood in Newport Beach, California.

- HR: – was really the beginning of a responsibility.” It wasn’t over, it was just the beginning.
- BL: Right, I mean so (object clattering) –
- HR: – And uh, I know Don and I both feel very strongly on that. We’re, we’re fighting like hell to get this bridge improved down here. We’re, we’re fighting like the devil to get the, the needed Coyote Can—uh, Canyon Bypass⁶² up around Corona del Mar, as a continuation of the Corona del Mar Freeway, uh, everything we can do –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – and we’re, uh, we still find ourselves, uh, (coughs) without, all the, all the cooperation in the world, uh, just like, uh, uh, the Coun—County of Orange, um, said that if, if we killed the freeway down here they would never share any, any highway funds with us again, but they have. (pauses) Uh, uh, they have. (pauses)
- BL: I re—I remember reading about that, uh –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – threats made by Arterial Highway Financing Program⁶³ and you know what.
- HR: But, you know, I came on the council, right? And I came out of a math classroom, um, uh, back then I am happy, uh, thinking I was going to go get over a lot of good programs and so on. And the first thing I’m caught up in this, this uh, scrap and, and, and moving along. I’m, I’m a, a littl—little wiser now ten years later and, uh –
- BL: – Hm, yeah. –
- HR: – I got caught, uh, as a, you know uh, in knee pants, you know, when this thing was going at least as far as council work was concerned.
- BL: Uh-huh.
- HR: And, uh, I probably said a lot of the wrong things at the wrong time, but I was trying to be as effective as I could, and, and uh, the w—people weren’t even talking as—about the word “environment,” uh, at, uh in ‘66.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: But, you were talking about a, a, a closed environment in a space ship, uh, this—bu—but you never were—you, you weren’t really talking about, you know, using the environme—term “environmentalist” or anything else. But, uh, having lived here—uh, we’ve owned property here since 1921, and, uh, I just couldn’t see a, a, a, big vault of concrete running down, uh, that coast highway block. It just, uh, aesthetically, it didn’t sit well with me. You know, it was –
- BL: – Yeah.

⁶² Presumably Coyote Canyon Drive in Newport Beach.

⁶³ Orange County program for high-capacity urban roads.

- HR: – probably a lot of my argumentation was, uh, more emotional than, than, than logical but, uh, when you can't convince them with logic you dazzle them with bullshit.
- BL: (laughs) Yeah, some of the imagery used by the "Freeway Fighters," um, words like Chinese Wall – ⁶⁴
- HR: – Oh yes. –
- BL: – and, uh, things like that seemed to have great impact on, uh, on everybody's opinion. Well, great impact in getting the ball rolling.
- HR: Right. –
- BL: – And –
- HR: – Well, you, you gotta, you, you, you gotta use words like that, and, and, and you, you, you know, it, it, it – w – we could sit around and be objective all day long, but until somebody gets excited, (pauses) nothing's gonna happen.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: And when he gets excited, he's gonna get a little subjective. So, that's what, that's what used to irritate me about the council. They would go 'round, and 'round, and 'round, and 'round, and be so damned objective about it. Uh, they could see good reasons for it; they could see good reasons not to have it, and they would like to argue and argue –
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: – and re-argue these –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – points until fi – so – somebody says, (clattering) "Piss on it, let's –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – get rid of it!" –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – uh, then something, you know, could happen.
- BL: Now that – I'm going to still drop my questions for right now, but in, in, in my reading, that's – it seemed to be going on like – what was it? Proposed originally in 1955 and then twelve years of – you know, '60, '61 they began to have the first, like the first meeting was held up at Harbor High,⁶⁵ and there's some kind of a syndrome, you know, that the issue would bounce back and forth between agencies and cities and, it just – names would change, and now I'm – kind of sound like a *Daily Pilot* editorial, but the, the whole thing just kinda went on and on and on –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – until, until your idea of the referendum. And then, also – and I'm – this is – I'm leading up to a really long question which I really haven't written down, but it seems to me that in the end, or toward the end, the last couple

⁶⁴ Reference to the Great Wall of China.

⁶⁵ Newport Harbor High School in Newport Beach, California.

- years of the issue, the word “environment” kept popping up more and more and, you know, Santa Barbara⁶⁶ oil spill and, uh, environmental impact reports and, you know Earth Day – ⁶⁷
- HR: – Hm. –
- BL: – and that kind of thing kind of congealed some, um, some emotions and opinions and –
- HR: – Right. –
- BL: – uh, it, with those kind of things, and, think that, that, um – did you feel that that maybe had, uh, more impact in, in getting it stopped as a just kind of a glo – philosophical thing? Or, do you think it was, you know, the, uh, the economics of it? Or –
- HR: – Oh I, I, I, I definitely think th – that w – we were running in extremely good luck because of the, the attitudes of people towards their, their own surroundings towards the – towards their ecology where sh – the, the, there was a tremendous fast shift in, in, in the, the general –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – public’s thinking and that was working with us all the way along I’d say. So more and more people were becoming aware that, that, that, that they could be jammed in here like Miami⁶⁸ or that, yo –, the, you know, uh we –
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: – could lose the upper bay –
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: (coughs) – uh, one of the last ecological preserves. These types of things were beginning to come onto people’s minds in general and that was just all working for us.
- BL: Right, high-rise –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – (inaudible), um, pollution –
- HR: – All those nasty words. –
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Highrise.
- BL: (laughs) Oh, um, okay let’s see if I, uh, if I’ve left anything out here. Um, (pauses) oh, we kinda covered a little bit to what extent did protests outside the area help the cause of fighting the freeway, such as in Venice,⁶⁹ and San Francisco?⁷⁰

[00:50:03]

⁶⁶ Coastal city in central California.

⁶⁷ International annual event promoting environmental protection, established 1970.

⁶⁸ Coastal metropolis in Florida.

⁶⁹ Coastal city in Los Angeles County, California.

⁷⁰ Coastal city in the Bay Area of northern California.

- BL: And finally, uh, seemed to be the Long Beach effort might even have come after Newport Beach's effort. There's – might – maybe Newport Beach was the leader in having that coastal freeway deleted –
- HR: – Right. –
- BL: – rather than being following, you know, except maybe in San Francisco –
- HR: – Hm. –
- BL: – but that's the far north. That's, that was in the city –
- HR: – Right. –
- BL: – not, not –
- HR: We, we used the San Francisco case, (clattering) uh, quite often uh, quoting. Uh, if San Francisco stopped it in midair, (pauses) –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – why couldn't we stop it before it gets started, you know, uh, we, we were using uh –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: And they did s – they'd been up there (laughs) –
- BL: – And by midair that's – you mean that freeway that had stopped –
- HR: – Yeah, it's just right, it's right up –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – there, and, um –
- BL: – Yeah. I've heard about it; I think I've seen it, but I just –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – doesn't click right now. It – it's not in the middle of the city, is it?
- HR: No, it's down towards the Embarcadero.⁷¹
- BL: Yeah, yeah.
- HR: And it just goes nowhere.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Yeah.
- BL: So, the San Francisco one is really maybe a precursor.
- HR: Yeah, right, uh, but the –
- BL: – But down here in Southern California, Newport Beach is the one that –
- HR: We – yeah, I think we led it here, uh, and, you know, there was becoming more and more really anti-free – freeway attitudes everywhere. Uh, everybo – everybody thought they were neat to drive on, but nobody wanted 'em through, through or near their town.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: And we, we, uh (clattering) – one of the arguments we tried to use was the, the fact that when the Eisenhower⁷²Administration, uh, passed the

⁷¹ Roadway along the waterfront in San Francisco, California.

⁷² Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), 34th U.S. president (1953–1961).

- Transportation Act,⁷³ which put, put up most of the money for all of this, it was for a series of freeways that bypassed cities.
- BL: Hm.
- HR: And we felt that the money wa—could not be legally used to go right through the heart of a city that didn't want it.
- BL: Yeah. Yeah, that definition of freeways, you know, interstate highways connecting cities becomes garbled when you come up with urban sprawl—
- HR: —Yeah.—
- BL: —and, uh, every freeway built—
- HR: —Yeah.—
- BL: —it just doesn't work. Alright, yeah. Um (pauses) that's—we've done that one already. Um, were there ever any real chances, um, for compromise in construction o—of the PC⁷⁴ freeway to Newport in, in your experience. Now, I know that you were only on the city council from '66 and—
- HR: —Um-hm.—
- BL: —may have been involved a little bit before that but, um, um, or was it simply not possible? Do you think that there were any points where it might have gone another way?
- HR: We tried, um, (clattering) one tri—time we tried for com—for compromise in—on routing a—and, um, uh, like running the, the freeway up close to seventeenth street in, uh—which would be right over dividing line between Newport and Costa Mesa. And Co—that's one reason Costa Mesa fought us so hard. We thought if we could get u—get it up to the back of the town a little more, it b—be better—in the early days, this is the type of thing we were fighting for, and it wasn't until we, we, we, we could see that the, uh, State Highway Commission was not gonna compromise anything that, that, that, that we dug in and, and, uh, said, "Okay, the war is on." But, uh, yeah there were a lot of negotiations, and, uh, done particularly by Paul Gruber, uh, in this respect.
- BL: Right. Yeah, it was interesting that the, to me, that the original decision was, uh, made by the (sighs) California Highway Commission. Seemed to be just the opposite of the recommendation of the, um—
- HR: Yeah.
- BL: —uh, J. C. Womack,⁷⁵ the, um—
- HR: —Um-hm.—
- BL: —uh, the old time, um—what do they call them? Chief Highway Engineer of the—
- HR: —Yeah.—

⁷³ 1956 Act authorizing the building of highways in the United States, a.k.a. the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act.

⁷⁴ Pacific Coast Highway, a.k.a. California State Route 1.

⁷⁵ California State Highway Engineer.

- BL: – State of California.
- HR: Um-hm, it was. It was contrary to his recommendation.
- BL: Seemed to me like – I’m not sure if I have it right now, and I – Telford was telling Womack to put it inland, or, or to put it on the coast. Telford was telling to put it on the cost. Womack told the commission to put it inland, and the commission put it on the coast.
- HR: Yeah –
- BL: – That’s –
- HR: – that’s right.
- BL: – is that right? Is that –
- HR: – That is –
- BL: – uh –
- HR: – correct.
- BL: – Yeah.
- HR: That is correct, and that’s something that we could never understand.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: Here –
- BL: – But –
- HR: – is this high paid executive, an engineer man who’s come up with all the studies, and he probably knew that politically it was, it was going to be impossible along the –
- BL: – Um-hm. –
- HR: – along the coastline too.
- BL: I can even remember reading what (clattering) Telford one time said that he wouldn’t want to mess up Newport Beach, because he intended to retire there.
- HR: (laughs)
- BL: And, uh, I don’t think he retired there; he is retired now.
- HR: No, uh, he’s, he’s got a – he’s got another name if he is (both laugh) Yeah.
- BL: Yeah, I could see –
- HR: Well, that was in the early in, in the early uh stages –
- BL: – yeah –
- HR: – of the thing. Yeah.
- BL: Yeah, right. Right up around adoption time, around ‘53.
- HR: Ye – who all are you gonna interview with?
- BL: Well, that’s, um, I just – gonna decide you know, I’ve heard your description of it, and I’ve – you told me that Bob Curci –
- HR: – yeah –
- BL: – that might be a good one –
- HR: – h – he he will –
- BL: – and, uh –

- HR: – have so much, uh, backup material, um, but he saved all of the copies of the *Ensign*,⁷⁶ and, all, all, and the *Pilot*. He has every clipping.
- BL: Is that right?
- HR: Yeah, and he all –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – he has them all highlighted too.
- BL: Yeah, um, thinking of all the microfilm I just read. I could have just read his clippings (both laugh) No, but, uh I’m gonna call him. Uh –
- HR: – Yeah, by all –
- BL: – I wanted –
- HR: – means do.
- BL: – uh, I wanted to interview you first –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – before I make another appointment and then, uh, uh, take this, uh, take this tape up to, to Cal State,⁷⁷ and then I wanna call Bob and uh –
- HR: Yeah, give Bo – give Bob a call; Bob works in San Bernardino, uh –
- BL: – Does he?
- HR: And, uh, lives in, um, Corona del Mar, and he, he doesn’t come home every night of the week, uh –
- BL: – Uh-huh.
- HR: Um, its, uh –
- BL: Right, there’s plenty of time to make an appointment.
- HR: He’s got an interesting situation, as he, uh, been – gonna tell, g – tell you, Italian family, works for his uncle.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: And, um, he and his cousin both work for the uncle and the, the, the uncle owns um, oh, Lido Peninsula⁷⁸ here, the uh, big golf, Indian Hills Golf Course⁷⁹ –
- BL: – Hm. –
- HR: – down in, uh, the valley, um grapefruit orchards in, throughout Coachella and, uh, lemons and oranges all over Arizona,⁸⁰ with a, a big, big family so – they built a, uh, shopping center up in, uh, San Bernardino using HUD funds.⁸¹ They tore out an old part of town, and they –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – put a shopping mall in it.
- BL: (inaudible)

⁷⁶ Newspaper published in Corona del Mar, California (1948–1950).

⁷⁷ California State University, Fullerton.

⁷⁸ Neighborhood on a man-made island in Newport Beach, California.

⁷⁹ Golf club in Riverside County, California

⁸⁰ State in the southwestern United States.

⁸¹ Financial assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- HR: Yeah, and, uh, so Bob is, is caught (coughs) in the horns of a dilemma 'cause he's working with the city council up in San Bernardino all the time, arguing, uh, with them exactly the w – opposite the way he's arguing with us down here. Uh, they – (inaudible) he wants all those goodies, he wants –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – all those freeways and uh –
- BL: Yeah, that's like a guy in environmental studies, and then goes out to invest in property again.
- HR: Yeah, right. (both laugh) How much can I get on this piece? Yes.
- BL: That's right. The uh – you mentioned that, and I'm just about, I'm done really with my questions, like, I have one more, and I, uh, on, on Bob Curci, you said that, um, he stayed in the background –
- HR: – Yeah. –
- BL: – but that he did a, a great deal of work for it and everything of course, you know, and he kept his records, uh why did he, uh, stay in the background?
- HR: Because of his uncle um, who is very sensitive to publicity, and, uh, one of the, one of our outstanding citizens here, uh, he owns heavy property in here. Uh, he comes to us and says, uh, you know, "How do you want it developed?" He, he doesn't, he's not, he's not pushing this –
- BL: – Um-hm. –
- HR: – he, he, he's, he, he's quiet, and Bob was really getting, going on this and, and his uncle just said uh, "Cool it."
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: "Stay out of it." But uh, Bob didn't stay out of it. Bob –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – went in, and, did all the background work, and, um, was very vocal at meetings, but not public meetings.
- BL: Um-hm.
- HR: (coughs)
- BL: Yeah, didn't wanna have his name in the *Pilot*.
- HR: That's right. E – Every, every time the uncle would go through them.
- BL: Yeah.
- HR: And, um, they got a million-dollar mall out there – this is, this is confidential between you and me – and he got a million-dollar mall, and his uncle gave him ten percent to run it. Uh, a te – ten million dollar mall, no (pauses)
- BL: Ten per –
- HR: – Yeah. So, Bob is doing alright.
- BL: (laughs) I get that.
- HR: – Once he kept his mouth closed –
- BL: – Yeah. –
- HR: – he would have the assignment.
- BL: Yeah. (inaudible)

HR: – I think, the uncle gave him the assignment partially to get him outta town because he was getting vocal again. But, we have a, um, where – a, a, an official, uh, council committee now and, um, um, the, uh, Corona del Mar Freeway and the Bonita Coyote Canyon Pass Ci – Citizens Advisory Committee –

BL: – Yeah. –

HR: – Traffic Advisory Committee⁸² (coughs) and, uh, Bob went to his uncle, uh, and asked if he cou – if he could serve on that committee ‘cause he had been asked by one of the councilman, and each councilman appoints two people. And, um, his uncle said, “Yes!” Uh, (clattering) fortunately just, uh, two months earlier the mall had become ninety, ninety-percent occupied.

BL: (laughs) That’s okay. Yeah

HR: You – you’ll enjoy Bob; and Bo – Bob will get so damn excited, uh –

BL: – Yeah, I mean, I’m excited about –

HR: He’s, he’s the typical Italian, you know and uh –

BL: – Yeah. –

HR: – uh –

BL: – Great, I’m re –

HR: – he wei – he weighs about three times as much as he should –

BL: – yeah –

HR: – and uh –

[01:00:20]

BL: – Sounds like a neat individual.

HR: But he, he could just get excited, God, and –

BL: – Hm. –

HR: – and, uh, his, his uh, quick memory for, for detail from this thing, of the, uh –

BL: – Yeah. –

HR: – you’ll shock him. Boy, he’ll go in to volume three, two, right there, you know?

BL: Yeah.

HR: You, you just got a hand on all of it.

BL: He should be able to fix up some of my details then, too.

HR: Yeah. He, he can, he can fill you in on a lot of the –

BL: – Um-hm, great. Um, last question. Um, let’s see. Left over is a state land holding in Newport, right?

HR: Right.

BL: What is the status of this land, and, of course, well, together with it, have the Little Hoover Commission acted effectively in getting it re-sold? Um –

⁸² Committee advising on traffic solutions in conjunction with local and state regulators.

HR: –Uh, Little Hoover Commission⁸³ (clattering) pushed real hard, uh, at one time, and I guess they still have the pressure on the Department of Transportation to dump that land. Uh, we are buying, uh, what we can and on what – whatever terms we can get it, uh, for open space and recreation.

BL: Um-hm.

HR: Now, we've been able to work out some deals with the state, and the state is very, the Department of Transportation is very cooperative with the city now on disposing of these lands. Um, but the big piece up at fifth and Marguerite⁸⁴ up in the Corona del Mar area that we've picked up. We have under lease the Pacific Rideaway, uh, down in West Newport where we're gonna put in a, a big, uh, tennis and paddle tennis, and, uh, park. We're, we're very short of parks. When, when –

BL: –Yeah. (clattering) –

HR: –when people first moved down here, they thought the ocean was the – and the bay was plenty of park. But, uh, not anymore. Now they want the, all of the other amenities that go along –

BL: –Right. –

HR: –with it. The, the tennis courts, the –

BL: –Right. –

HR: –hand ball courts, the – and so on. So, uh, we have a very, uh, industrious, uh, um, park program going, and, and we're taking every bit of the land that we can get, and use, th – that we can afford, uh, from the, uh, surplus land. As a matter of fact, we're just picking up a package uh, now, it's over behind the, the old Mariner's Mile,⁸⁵ uh, on Pacific Coast Highway, and we're, we're gonna turn that, uh, into off-street parking to alleviate the parking problem of Pacific Coast Highway.

BL: Yeah, I remember that being talked about during the freeway issue.

HR: Yeah.

BL: Balboa Bay Club. The manager at the time was Dick Stevens.⁸⁶

HR: Yeah, he wanted the –

BL: –wanted to have a land buy, I think one had the state buy some land –

HR: –right, yeah –

BL: –and, uh, from him so that he could still have his parking, but not have all that empty land.

HR: Yeah.

⁸³ Milton Marks "Little Hoover" Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, established 1962.

⁸⁴ Street in Newport Beach, California.

⁸⁵ Historic area in Newport Beach, California.

⁸⁶ Richard S. Stevens (1930–2010), president of the Balboa Bay Club, commissioner for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

BL: (indaudible) Okay, well, um, (pauses) this has just been fantastic. I can't, uh, you know, uh, thank you enough—

HR: — This was fun. —

BL: — for —

HR: — I enjoyed it. —

BL: — for giving me your time and, and, uh, I'm glad that you enjoyed it. I just, you know — that, that last one about the future of Newport traffic problems, but I think that I'll wait on that one because that's another, uh, another whole uh—

HR: — That's right. —

BL: — you know, maybe for my PhD—

HR: — Yeah. —

BL: — you know —

HR: — There you go. —

BL: We'll come back and work—

HR: Yeah, hold something in reserve for that.

BL: Yeah, yeah.

HR: Yeah, no I have—

BL: — Yeah. —

HR: — I have enjoyed it and I, I know damn well that, uh, um, at dinner time or sometime, I'll think of a million things that I, I should have told you that I hadn't—

BL: — Yeah. —

HR: — you know, because—

BL: — Hey, well that's okay be— you know, just make a note to yourself and, uh, and, and I'll get back to ya—

HR: — Alright. —

BL: — you know. Be— before the semester is over.

HR: I— If, if, if I think of some things, I'll—

[01:04:04]

END OF INTERVIEW