

## **A TEI Project**

# **Interview of Edward A. Holden**

## **Contents**

### **1. Transcript**

- 1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (June 10, 1998)
- 1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (June 10, 1998)
- 1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (June 24, 1998)
- 1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (July 24, 1998)
- 1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (August 24, 1998)
- 1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (August 24, 1998)
- 1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (October 21, 1998)
- 1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two (October 21, 1998)

## **1. Transcript**

### **1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (June 10, 1998)**

Murdoch

Mr. Holden, before we get into planning and your history in planning, will you tell us a little bit about your early life and, particularly, what got you into this part of the country?

Holden

Yes, Norm. I was born in San Dimas, in California, Los Angeles County, in 1919. That's quite a while ago. I am now seventy-eight years old. I want to say a couple of words to begin, before we get back to the immediate story. And that is basically that what we're talking about is seventy-five years not only of planning, but basically the activity, the wild waves of development, that swept over Los Angeles County in little better than the seventy-five year period. Although I didn't know very much about planning during the first few years of my life, I think that the planning story of Los Angeles really begins somewhere about the time of my birth, which was right after the First World War-- Actually, a little after that, but we'll get to that later. As for my being in California, the reason relates to another reason why many people came to California--health reasons. The story is that my grandfather, Harry Justin Holden, was in Milwaukee working for the Allis Chalmers Company as chief draftsman designing, I should say, steam engines, big steam engines. The Holden family itself, if we go clear back, arrived in America somewhere

around 1620 or '21. And when two Holdens came to this country from England--one of them Justinian [Holden]--in various stages he, and much, much later, his offspring, moved westward until finally they arrived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. So we take up the story with my grandfather, who at that time cleaned out the desk--so the family legend goes--of a gentleman who had tuberculosis or consumption, as the word was in those days. So after this, it turned out that he had in some fashion--he claims from this cleaning out of the desk--contracted the disease. After a short time with the disease, a family conference was held and my father, Harry Roger Holden, who was then in the eleventh grade, not quite graduated from high school, was selected with his father to move to a more suitable, salubrious climate. So he and my grandfather were dispatched by Santa Fe Railroad and arrived shortly after that in Palm Springs near the spa-- There was a spa at that time on Indian land.

Murdoch

And approximately what year was that?

Holden

The year of that was, I think, 1913. My father and my grandfather then slept out there for a period of time in front of a big old house which turned out to be a sanatorium. Meanwhile, my grandmother Hannah Holden and the other two children, my aunt and uncle [Helen Holden and Chester Holden] packed up the house, sold it, and moved out to join the others. My grandmother got a job as cook for a lumber company, a lumber operation at Kean Camp, which is somewhere very near to Idyllwild. And my father landed at least a part-time job where every week he went down to Banning, picked up the mail, and brought it back to the Kean Camp. Well, that was a pretty good life. It didn't last to long, and my folks or my grandparents thought maybe they ought to look for something else. They met a fellow by the name of Maybon, who lived in Claremont. And Mr. Maybon extolled the virtues of that particular area and particularly the orange groves that were around in that neighborhood. My grandfather then eventually made his way to San Dimas and bought a five-acre orange ranch on the outskirts of town and lived there for the next three or four years until his death. My father started out as an entrepreneur and had a set of mules and did farmwork for the orange growers. After a relatively short period of time--well, not so short either-- During that same period my brother [Harry Steller Holden] was born in 1918, and I was born in 1919. I should say that indeed my father did get married in the interim. He managed that by writing letters to my mother [Karolena Anna Steller] in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They had met at a church there. She accepted his invitation of marriage, and they came out to California on their honeymoon, back to San Dimas. Well, where they arrived at that time was to my mind a very interesting and stable community. It was in the heart of the orange empire of Los Angeles County

and extended Southern California then. I think one can talk a bit about San Dimas and the orange empire and what was accomplished during that time-- maybe not things that were called planning so much, though there were some which I'll mention in a minute.

Murdoch

Oranges were king in California.

Holden

Oranges were king at that particular period of time, that's right. There were a few, you know, innovations. Like they developed the refrigerator car, so the oranges could be moved to the East easily. The orange growers-- I should describe the community a little bit, or the orange growers. Actually, it was a community there, and I'm sure elsewhere, of relatively small landowners. There were some very big ones, to be sure, all around Southern California, but also many small ones. It's kind of fascinating that five acres of orange grove would have supported two people for a few years. Probably with a little help from my dad and possible from-- Well, the other kids were too young, my aunt and uncle. But it was pretty small. Ten acres could raise a family in those days--ten acres fully developed in oranges. Twenty acres was a pretty good living. And if you had sixty or two hundred you were in clover, plus. Anyway, my father then decided that the two mules had to go one way or another and that he wanted to get a job elsewhere. So he did obtain a job on a sixty-acre ranch owned by a gentleman by the name of Dennison, who is reported to have been, in family history, a meatpacker from the Midwest--I think Kansas City. When I was very young, about four or five, we moved into a house on that particular ranch--a nice ranch style house, a couple of bedrooms, all the facilities. It had plumbing, running water, etc. In other words, no-- [laughs] That brings up the point I wanted to make. This was a land of gentleman farmers, and they had most of the amenities of life that they needed. It was a very stable life for many, many years. There are a number of things about it that were unusual. First of all, almost all the roads were already paved. This was not a western ranch community in the typical sense. There were also-- Particularly on the main survey lines, places had long since been surveyed, the national survey.

Murdoch

Well, and were automobiles starting to be used?

Holden

Automobiles were starting to be seen. Well, as a matter of fact, by the time I was four or five, there were a lot of automobiles. My folks at that time had already owned a--not a Model T. Of course, Model T's were around in--what was it?--1906 or 1908, or somewhere, where they really came out. But we had an old Chevrolet and also, before that, an open car. I don't know what it could have been. My uncle [Otto Steller] on my mother's side came out from

Wisconsin in 1928 or '29, I believe. He was driving an old open Packard--well, maybe a new open Packard; I'm not too sure [laughs]--which he drove cross-country. But, interestingly enough, connecting this whole thing to planning, there was an amazing community in the fact that the highways were paved. Also, another thing of great interest was that by that time, the water availability problems had been solved. These are all, you know, preliminary to any planning activity in the whole area. Carey McWilliams describes this somewhat in at least one of his books. The net upshot of the water solution, so to speak, was that most of the water rights were congregated in water districts, special districts actually, so that many small owners around and on the ranches would become members of those districts. Even with the small ranch that my grandfather had, he had a share in a larger water district, which assured him a certain amount of water to irrigate the orange ranch as needed. That was true basically of the whole area up and down and almost all the way around, even through the orange empire as it went down to Orange County and as it went west into the San Fernando Valley and into Ventura.

Murdoch

It's a fascinating story. You really grew up with California, didn't you?

Holden

That's right. We started out that way. And importantly, you see, what was happening is that all the infrastructure for later activities were beginning to be put in place. Another one, up in San Dimas Canyon, we have a situation where from time to time there were extreme floods. This area did not escape all of these special problems [inaudible]-- But at that time flooding, particularly, in addition to the question of having enough water, was an important consideration. So California established a flood control district and established a number of dams at the heads of many of these canyons along the foothills. The net result of that-- Well, a story on that. On the ranch where my father worked when I was five or six, in the couple of years before I have any memory, there was rather a huge flood that came down San Dimas Canyon. It wiped out almost a quarter of-- Well, not quite wiped out. What it did was take almost all the topsoil off of one portion of the orchard, washed it down through where the houses were and off into a two- or three-acre piece of land up against the hills, where it all settled down. As I was a youngster, what was happening a large part of the time was that by horse and wagon a large part of that soil was being moved back to the upper end of the sixty-acre property. In addition, a rather minor flood-control diversion system was developed so that the water would flow around that particular section. However, the dam completed not too long before solved this particular problem to a good extent for that particular area. The flood control district went on, of course, to bring not only the dams in the upper reaches, but over a whole series of years, including bond issues and

so on, until in spite of the fact that we could have some floods in extreme situations as late as the late thirties and even into the forties and fifties, by the end of that period there was almost nobody in this area who really had much of a flood control problem. Now, I can't say that's absolute, because only two or three years ago some parts of the area behind the-- What the heck is the name of the dam [Sepulveda Dam] in the San Fernando Valley? There were big floods there behind the dam.

Murdoch

But you were saying your uncle came out in 1928.

Holden

Yeah. He actually went to work in Los Angeles as an advertising executive and eventually, with another party, in a small advertising business.

Murdoch

Had that been his field before?

Holden

Yes, in Milwaukee. His name was Steller by the way, Otto Steller.

Murdoch

Well, that was when advertising was just coming into its own, because radio had become a key thing and advertising really boomed.

Holden

That it did. And it was one of those many waves of activity that swept over this region. My story, however, in terms of the orange empire, basically relates to the fact that it was a great place for me to grow up. There are many who have a nostalgia for the era and for the orange empire and so on. And truly, it was a really stable community for many, many years. We have to trace the start clear back to about 1873 and the development of the navel orange and so on and the planting and growing of a tree, which would last anywhere from thirty to sixty years, you know. So in my day it was a stable community.

Murdoch

And a young boy could roam at will?

Holden

Pretty much at will. We could climb and enjoy the oranges at the top of a tree instead of the nice big ones at the bottom. [mutual laughter] Of course, we had to work, and I had to later help out on the five-acre ranch, particularly. But we weren't very stressed or worked very hard.

Murdoch

Well, you were-- We're talking about the time when you were ten to twelve years old?

Holden

Yeah. Throughout high school, throughout elementary school and high school. They had, obviously, a complete school system. We had a county library in

town. Pomona College had long since been established nearby in Claremont. The educational system was as complete as any place in the country at that time. It was an ideal community.

Murdoch

You felt that it was a good school system?

Holden

Yeah, it was a good school system. I went to school with almost anybody and everybody. Among them, descendants of the Quiróz family, particularly, who owned originally, years ago, the original Spanish grant in that particular area. And even now their house outside La Verne is reserved by the state as an example of a hacienda.

Murdoch

What's the name again?

Holden

Quiróz is the name of the family. I think the hacienda house that still exists east of La Verne is-- I can't recall the name at the moment. I went to school in the first grade--they didn't have a kindergarten--and met my first love, a little girl whose name was Bixby.

Murdoch

[laughs] Well, that's a famous California name.

Holden

Bixby is, of course, a famous name. I do not know--and, of course, I did not know at the time--how closely this particular Bixby family was related to Fred Bixby and some of the others who before that particular time in the eighties owned the Los Cerritos Rancho and also the Los Alamitos Rancho. By the way, some of that property was eventually sold and became the city of Long Beach that the Bixbys owned down to the south. Well, those are--

Murdoch

Well, but then the Depression hit the country, and I guess it didn't really hit until '32 or '33. How did the Great Depression affect this community?

Holden

Well, I think for the most part that the orange empire survived very, very well. We felt it. My father was reduced from six days of working to five with an agreement that he would take care of the five acres, which he now owned--he inherited [it] from his folks--on the extra day and work on the larger ranch with a slight reduction in salary. The salary was not large, I must admit. [It was] large enough, however, so that we could have bought a car and so that we had everything that we needed. So I didn't--

Murdoch

No, but how did it affect other people in the community? About the same?

Holden

About the same. There were some who were unfortunate enough not to have any resources. Of course, they had to be taken care of one way or another. There were means of doing that; however, I don't remember that anybody was really in need anymore, certainly not any more than they are today.

Murdoch

Well, then a little later on, the dust bowl and there was immigration. Now, did any of the immigrants fleeing the dust bowl arrive anywhere near your community?

Holden

Not a great number, but quite a few in a way. They wandered in. They worked on the orange groves.

Murdoch

Survived somehow?

Holden

Moved on, went to school-- [They] moved on and became substantial members of the community for the most part. We didn't have too much of a problem with race either, it seems to me, at that time, which might sound odd.

Murdoch

Were there Hispanics working on the orchards?

Holden

There were Hispanics and there were Japanese. There were a couple of Jewish store owners in Pomona, particularly. It was a substantially Protestant-Christian community, I'll have to admit. But there was a Catholic church. The main guy who ran the feed store was Catholic. So it was quite mixed. And a couple of Japanese people who were very prominent in the community and supervised picking for the orange house and so on lived in the center of the community and went to the same church we did. There was maybe a little discrimination in terms of earning power and so on.

Murdoch

But, socially, everybody intermingles?

Holden

Socially-- And there was a barrio where the transient Mexican American population stayed, some of them. But most of those who stayed permanently were scattered out in the community.

Murdoch

You mentioned earlier some other names, [T. Roe] Hobbs, [R.M.] Teague, and Gladstone. You want to comment on those?

Holden

Well, their names now grace many of the activities in the region. There was a rather interesting history of the town written [inaudible]-- The [T. Roe] Hobbs nursery, later acquired by R.M. Teague, was described at that time as a

worldwide organization in that they both supplied exotics from this area, including the orange trees and so on, but [they] also imported from the world. A much larger operation than I realized was true. I actually went to school with a son of the original owner, Mr. Hobbs. Mr. Teague was a large landowner. And the Teague family name is one in the agricultural industry that you find in various places throughout California, like a number of other-- Well, one I remember particularly was a Teague Boulevard south of San Francisco. You run up through the valley and you run through a town up there. We'll add the name of the town later. But in any event, [it was] way up north, Teague Boulevard. I went to school with Howard Teague. Oh, another item which the county took care of and was already established at this time was fire control. There was a fire observation station in the mountains--not clear on top, but a ways up to one of the peaks that you could see in the foothills. The mountain is named Gladstone. Gladstone owned a large orange grove there. I also went to school with his daughter. But anyway, so you see the names of the old families got to grace all the streets in the community. But to carry on, so it was a good community. Now, the thing that occurred, of course, and began to occur as I finished high school and decided to go on to college-- A couple of things occurred. First of all, in my own case, and I think in many other sons and daughters of the--

Murdoch

Orange growers.

Holden

--orange growers, I had no idea and no intention whatsoever of becoming an orange rancher. It was the last of my desires to settle in this idyllic community and continue as an orange grower, you know? I know several of my schoolmates at that particular time who wound up in the education field. So what we were seeing in the people themselves was a gradual shifting from an agricultural life to a more urban life.

Murdoch

Well, that's the history of the United States.

Holden

That's the history of the United States. And the immenseness of the change comes when you consider that today you can hardly find an orange tree in Los Angeles County. These hundreds of acres spread all across the foothills, no more. Now, there are some left. There are some out by Riverside, and there are some, not very many, down in Orange County.

Murdoch

Well, there's a few near one of those museums out there.

Holden



And which reminds me of one other thing that is background of this whole planning bit. The University of California was established long since, at the time I'm talking about, and had an agriculture experimentation program. My father, even for the five acres that we owned, had a little agreement with the researchers that he would supply them all the data and practices he had on his little farm acres. And then other orchards of various size were also giving the same data so that each year, as crop seasons go by, he could compare his operation to what other people were doing and how the whole citrus industry could be improved. And the location of the experimental station that the state owned was, of course, near Riverside and is now the campus of the University of [California] Riverside. So I guess, from most people's point of view, what I'm really recounting here in this period is that all kinds of things which basically are the foundation for an expanded urban development were already substantially beginning to be known. I think maybe we should digress one more minute to bring that up to date in terms of the planning operation. Because remember that we had quite a few people in downtown Los Angeles and so on and more came out during World War I. There was quite a boom immediately after World War I. And what was happening right then, the city of Los Angeles formed a planning commission. What was it, 1921? Gordon Whitnall was the director. In 1922 at the end of the year, the [Los Angeles County] Regional Planning Commission of the county was formed. And here, again, because I'm going to be talking about regional planning later, I think it's important to note that the county planning commission was deliberately named the Regional Planning Commission. It was a commission, ultimately, of seven members. It started off after some manipulation in the early couple of years of many members down to a workable seven, which existed clear up until the time in 1947 that I became a staff member of the Regional Planning Commission and beyond. To this day there are seven members. Or has it changed to five? It was changed to five at one time.

Murdoch

In '47?

Holden

When?

Murdoch

Well, somewhere in that--

Holden

Somewhere, yeah. And the next part that goes with that and relates to my feeling that all the roads were paved is the fact that the first thing that the Regional Planning Commission worked on in those early days--Hugh Pomeroy and another man who has been interviewed here for this series of interviews,

William J. Fox-- They were working on the highway plan at that time. Even the federal government was providing money from a very early time.

Murdoch

Well, we'll get to that fascinating story, but let's get you through college. Where did you go to high school?

Holden

I went to a high school called Bonita [Union] High School. Actually, it is no more. As a matter of fact, I think it's a-- It isn't anymore. It changed into a Catholic high school and a new high school was built.

Murdoch

Well, was that close by or was that much of a commute?

Holden

No, it wasn't a very far commute. The two communities of San Dimas and La Verne are relatively close together, within five miles of each other.

Murdoch

How did you get to high school?

Holden

By bus for the most part. I rode my bike to elementary school, but by bus to high school.

Murdoch

Are there any of your high school teachers that you felt were particularly good, that had a lasting impression on you?

Holden

Oh, several actually. They had a pretty good program. The one I remember particularly, strangely enough, is my English teacher, Miss Carpenter. She got me interested in intellectual things, pretty much, reading and so on. I don't necessarily say that she was the major source of my interest in going to college. But from a very early time that I remember, I felt the only thing that would satisfy me was to go on to college.

Murdoch

And get off the farm?

Holden

And get off the farm, yeah. [laughs]

Murdoch

The farm just may not be quite the right word.

Holden

Orange ranch.

Murdoch

Yeah, get off the ranch. I should have said, "Get off the ranch."

Holden

Let me tell one other interesting incident or thought, rather. We're talking about a period which really goes back to the 1880s and then forward to my time after World War I. But the thing that occurred to me at that time, somewhere along there I think, "I am in the West," you know. And we have all these stories about the Wild West and all that kind of stuff. I sure as heck don't see any Wild West. [laughs] By the very earliest that I can remember, there was a Fordson tractor on the big ranch. And shortly after that, only a year or two--I must have been seven or eight--all the horses and mules disappeared off the place, and we had altogether mechanical equipment. I never really learned to ride a horse because there weren't any around to ride. Well, a neighbor of ours did have a couple of riding horses, and once in a while I'd get a little ride on a kind of a quiet riding horse.

Murdoch

Well, so you decided to go to college, and where did you go?

Holden

I was influenced by my uncle, who was in the advertising business, so I got a scholarship and went the first year to USC [University of Southern California].

Murdoch

And what year was it? 'Thirty--?

Holden

That was thirty--

Murdoch

--six, seven?

Holden

Let's see. I graduated from high school in '37, yeah. It was the year of the big rain.

Murdoch

Well, USC was quite a ways-- Where did you live?

Holden

I lived at one of the dorms--not a fraternity, but the dorm in back of the Sigma Chi [laughs]--for a year. The most important thing that influenced me in that year was again a gentleman who taught an English class--a literature class I think it was--at USC whose name I don't remember, but who felt that there were only two good liberal arts education schools in the western part of the United States. One of them [was] in Oregon--if I remember, we can add its name--and the other one [was] Pomona College, which was nearby my hometown. This encouraged me to go--

Murdoch

To transfer to Pomona.

Holden

Transfer to Pomona College, where I subsequently graduated three years later.

Murdoch

What was your major?

Holden

My major was political science, interestingly enough. So I wound up with a degree in political science.

Murdoch

Well, that was what you were doing when you started this phase.

Holden

That's right.

Murdoch

That's basically political science.

Holden

It's a knowledge-- Well, actually, in terms of my total college career and advanced degrees, it also applies. In sequence, next I decided I wanted to get out of the country, locally, when I graduated from college. So I got a scholarship and went to school on the East Coast in Boston at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. I had this crazy idea that I might be a diplomat or something. I went there a year. By the end of that year it would have been 1942, and the war in Europe had started.

Murdoch

Well, before we leave Pomona, what other than your political science courses-- ? Were there certain courses that you particularly enjoyed or any other people that you particularly remember from the Pomona days?

Holden

Well, I go to about every fifth-year reunion there, and we have a number of people that I know from my class. In terms of professors, I remember several of them, a philosophy professor particularly, who in later years caused me to want very much to travel, particularly to Greece and Rome, which I subsequently did. But that's another story. My political science professor was an old man; [he] irritated the life out of me because he was a fairly conservative old guy. And most of the people around were fairly liberal at the time. Also of some interest, politically--I guess we might as well mention it--one of the schools that we had in the San Dimas area was the [Horace Jeremiah] Voorhis School for Boys. And the boys in that school went to my school, which was a smaller school about halfway between the main grammar schools at La Verne and San Dimas, called La Verne Heights. So I went to school with those people, and these are the guys that ultimately staffed the congressional office of Representative Voorhis, a Democrat who served a number of years during the Depression. But he is most noted, of course, for the fact that he was replaced in later years by Richard [M.] Nixon.

Murdoch

Well, those years were very tumultuous political years in California. The impact of the Depression generated all sorts of movements--"Thirty Dollars Every Friday" and "Ham and Eggs." It was a very tumultuous time.

Holden

My somewhat conservative uncle told me one time that he was going to vote for Upton Sinclair, [who was] involved in one of these things you're talking about [End Poverty In California (EPIC)], primarily because things couldn't get any worse. I don't think he was quite that bad off. There was some business still going on during the Depression here, but things were pretty slow. Anyway, that's an incident-- Subsequently, in going back to Boston and then to work in Washington D.C. for a short period of time, I did visit the office and met Voorhis and chatted with some of my old friends in the Voorhis congressional office.

Murdoch

How interesting.

Holden

Naturally, I didn't vote for Nixon. [laughs] I guess that's a safe thing maybe to say.

Murdoch

Well, you developed into quite a scholar and had quite a few academic achievements. Don't be modest. Tell us about that.

Holden

Well, what happened, of course, at that time-- Now I'm down in Washington after having spent a year in Boston, and the war was going on as a matter of fact. I had been exempt because some doctor along the way had thought I had some kind of heart murmur. Well, at that time the army was getting a little short of personnel. That was in late 1942. So I got a summons to come in for a reexamination. The army doctor at that time couldn't find any heart murmur, and to tell you the truth, I couldn't feel any effects of it either. So being a nice patriotic fellow, I had no particular objection to his finding me fit for the service.

Murdoch

No, of course not.

Holden

So off I went as a private to basic training in Arkansas.

## **1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (June 10, 1998)**

Holden

This session we are going to start with my entry into the armed forces before World War II. This was in 1942 in the late fall. At that particular time I was

drafted, as a matter of fact; that's important to note. I had previously had some medical exemptions, which were now retracted, and the new doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me. It so happened there wasn't anything wrong with me apparently, because I served successfully for three and a half years. During that time my army experience produced one interesting series of results. Shortly after being drafted and being sent to Arkansas for basic training, I volunteered, I thought, to go to the Army Air Forces. Well, it turned out I did. They sent me to Rome, New York, and I became associated with the Air Force Statistical Service. That statistical service is and was rather interesting because it had to do in this particular situation with inventory and other subject areas that were recorded in these rudimentary aspects of data processing with IBM machines, etc. It was a card system pretty much, but, nevertheless, it was the predecessor of most of the computer-type activities that we know about today.

Murdoch

They called them Hollerith cards in the old days. The man who invented the IBM card was a guy named [Herman] Hollerith.

Holden

Yes. And then, you know, at that time the secretary of the army was-- No, not the secretary but the man who was called upon to apply the proper inventory procedures to the air force was Robert [S.] McNamara, who worked for IBM and subsequently became secretary of the army. So I got my introduction in the rudiments of computing and of record keeping and inventories in those army days. I was in the army for three and a half years. During that time I stayed in the United States, almost got shipped out a couple of times but was finally retained in the United States and accumulated enough points and was discharged in 1945, I think, at the end of the Japanese effort. At that time what happened to me essentially was that I changed my mind as to what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. I no longer was as interested in being a diplomat and was more interested in becoming an architect. So I then immediately enrolled in 1945 at the USC School of Architecture. After a year and a half or so I found I really was very interested in city planning. I had taken a couple of classes. I was also interested in getting married and getting a job. So I went downtown and took an examination. I passed the examination for planning assistant with the Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission. At the same time I got married to Miriam Louise Bader. A few days after I was married I went to work for the county of Los Angeles, the Regional Planning Commission. That brings us kind of up to date, and we can start out with a new phase of my career. I think maybe some background information about what was happening at the time is in order. I came to the Regional Planning Commission right after the war at a time when everything suggested a very rapid expansion of the population of this region, particularly Los Angeles

County, and not only an expansion of the residential development but an expansion of the industrial development as well. In other words, people weren't going to come to Los Angeles unless they also had a job. After the war people wanted to come to Los Angeles, and for a number of fortuitous circumstances the jobs came with them. That wasn't particularly my job at the Regional Planning Commission, but it was the Regional Planning Commission's problem, I think. The problem was the vast expansion at that time of the population. But we have to say, going back to the first part of my discussion, that the things that happened in the thirties and in the twenties were many things that made it possible for a rapid expansion to follow fairly readily in the period after the war. For example, to summarize quickly, the Regional Planning Commission had gone through a long period starting from 1922, and they had developed a number of items. They had a viable zoning ordinance, sub-division ordinance. They had a general plan of highways, perhaps most important of all, related to the rapidly expanding population. The commission, interestingly enough, had developed a plan of freeways. It was not until a few years later that the state assumed this planning activity. By that time, the initial stretch of the Arroyo Seco Freeway had been completed. It is true, however, that the continuation of the freeway through downtown Los Angeles was not to be completed for another four years, not until the early years of 1950. At that time also the county already had an air pollution control district, and it also had many operations in flood control. There were a lot of the fundamental needs of urban development already basically ready to go in Los Angeles as this great number of people came into town. William J. Fox, now retired from the Marine Corps, as a matter of fact-- [He was] promoted to general on his retirement. General Fox came back to the Regional Planning Commission as its director. Actually, he was director not only of the county planning commission, but since 1933 had been director of the [Los Angeles County] Building Department. Kind of an interesting association of ideas. In any event, as he came back to town he noted the possibilities of expansion and looked at the staff of the commission. Among other things that he did was to determine that an extra effort should be made to refine many of the zoning plans that existed for various parts of the county. Before we go into that in detail, I do want to digress a minute to say that, actually, the first assignment I had at the Regional Planning Commission was with John [P.] Commons, who headed the research division. This enabled me to come in contact with a number of things that I had had very little contact with before. Not the least of which, for example, was counting automobiles in a traffic survey. This particular case--the first one I ever undertook or was a part of--involved how many cars came through the Second and Third Street tunnels into Los Angeles and whether or not those were flowing at capacity. The reason for the study was that, at that time, the

downtown civic center plan was pretty well along, but there was a big fuss coming up from the attorneys in the area who thought that maybe the county courthouse in the civic center was not properly located with respect to them and a better place for the courthouse would have been in the center of the area, which is essentially a large parking area now and was, at that time, between Second and Fourth Streets and--let's see what would it be?--Broadway and Spring. Well, anyway, as a result of the traffic studies that we made and other activities, what resulted was a change in the plan, but not a major one. The courthouse was moved to the south side of the civic center from its location at the north side in the original plan. And the administrative center was moved to the north side from the south side, as it was in the original plan.

Murdoch

And where was the office of the Regional Planning Commission located at that time?

Holden

Well, at that time the county was expanding a lot. Our immediate location had been for a while, and was for quite a while, the corner of Second [Street] and Broadway. We stayed there for a good many years until the department moved into a building which was basically the county engineer's building and then into the new hall of records finally, which was smack in the middle of the civic center.

Murdoch

Where the regional planning department still is.

Holden

And where the planning department still is. That's correct.

Murdoch

Okay.

### **1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (June 24, 1998)**

Murdoch

Ed, we've talked about your early days and your graduation and your entering into the planning profession. Please continue telling us about your experiences at the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission in the early days.

Holden

Yes, I was talking at the end of the last session about my experience with John P. Commons in the research section. Again, it emphasizes that the Regional Planning Commission, as John Commons so very often reiterated, was a Regional Planning Commission. His position with the research department emphasized the fact that the county had interests throughout the county and that they were essentially at that time concerned with the urban region, which was



largely within Los Angeles County. We were talking also about the fact of a traffic survey we had made. That could be expanded to say that the results of doing that kind of study ultimately resulted in the CAO, chief administrative officer of the county, becoming very interested in traffic flow in downtown Los Angeles and, ultimately, the adoption of a policy which was definitely to limit the number of county activities which were to remain in the Los Angeles downtown area and a conscious effort to decentralize many county activities. Along with that question of decentralization, the CAO, consulting together with the planning director of the RPC [Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission], decided to provide parking areas for county employees who worked in downtown Los Angeles--plenty of parking spaces. But, obviously, downtown cannot accommodate everybody, even though most people would like to be downtown. And there was a definite policy on decentralization of county activities. What I want to get back to now is the fact that the Regional Planning Commission of the county was on the leading edge of the great expansion that occurred at this point immediately after the war. I've already alluded to various kinds of little incidents which suggested the importance of this--for example, that I was born in this part of the country and that during the war I did not have to defend this area in any sense. Almost any time anybody began talking about Los Angeles County, they were saying, "Oh, I'd been there during the war, and I'm going to go back." This kind of thing. People were coming, and they wanted to come to California. So there we were.

Murdoch

There was a very popular song in the late forties.

Holden

Yes.

Murdoch

"Make San Fernando Valley My Home" ["San Fernando Valley"].

Holden

Right. So, as I say, Fox had come back. He reorganized the county work force and asked for more people. We began actively to look at the county zoning ordinance and to refine the zoning in most of the unincorporated areas south of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Murdoch

General Fox was such a dominant factor in planning in the thirties and then in the forties. Tell us a little bit more. General Fox was a director when you first went to work for the county. He was your boss, your big boss. What was your first impression of General Fox when you first met him?

Holden

I didn't know him from Adam. I was sent up to have an interview with him, which was a rather short and clipped, military-type interview in which he

concluded by saying I was welcome to the staff of the planning commission.  
[laughs]

Murdoch

Well, through the years you got better acquainted with him. What were some of your impressions of General Fox?

Holden

General Fox was--

Murdoch

A martinet?

Holden

He was certainly a military man. If that qualifies as a martinet, I guess probably that's what you would call him. The important point, of course, was that he was an avid planner and that he believed in the planning process particularly as it could be applied in any sense in an engineering way. He was very interested, for example, in the plan of highways as an engineering activity--the location of those highways--so that they could then be properly surveyed and developed. He was a very prominent and important person in the planning development of the area. He did not stay a long time as a planning director after he came back from the war. It may be remembered at that time there were a number of efforts to combine various kinds of engineering, surveying, mechanical activities into a department of the engineer or a--

Murdoch

Public works?

Holden

--public works department in a good many areas. One of the interesting stories that he recalls or that I was told was that he and Art [Arthur] Will sat down one day. They looked at all the county departments and decided that the consolidation of the most important ones into a Department of Engineering with the county engineer at the head was the way to go, and they did. They put the surveyor, for example, the department of the surveyor as well as all--not flood control, because that was a separate district--the county engineering activities, all except for one, which Fox didn't want to have under his jurisdiction, namely the maintenance of automobiles for the supervisors--  
[mutual laughter] But most of the rest of the activities including the building department, etc.--

Murdoch

So General Fox took over the department and gave up the regional planning. What year was this, approximately, and who became the new regional planning director?

Holden

That was in about 1954, and Milton Breivogel became the director of planning at that time. We'll get to Milton Breivogel. There are some things that I'd like to add here in the period before that. I, of course, learned a lot of my trade as a planner in this period when we were doing these area or neighborhood zoning studies. The real problem at that time was not that the county didn't have a zoning ordinance, but basically the ordinance placed much of the unincorporated area of the county in a zone called M3, which was not much of a restriction. It had a few special permits required for the most important, obnoxious developments. So almost anything went in most of this area. It was only a short time, I guess, before that that agriculture had been introduced in the county ordinance, but most of the area was still M3. Some effort had to be made to tighten up, to decide whether there were some areas which should be strictly reserved for residential developments to keep out industrial developments. There's a general selection process to select neighborhood and community centers, etc. This was a process that we were supposed to be going through for these individual, unincorporated communities. Now, this process proceeded rapidly. Over a period of time the county got more staff, and it gradually became possible to spend time on other planning concerns. There is one point that we might mention here. What we were doing at this particular time-- We were acting as the local planning commission--not the Regional Planning Commission, but the local planning commission--for a population of about nine hundred thousand people in the unincorporated area. Now, that's a lot of people, and obviously it was a rather huge job and the reason that the Regional Planning Commission was as large a commission as it was.

Murdoch

Ed, in that period of the early fifties, as you best recall, what was the approximate size of the staff at the Regional Planning Commission?

Holden

To tell you the truth, I don't remember. It was probably fifty or sixty, I would think.

Murdoch

Well, sixty people, that was a pretty good-sized planning staff for those days.

Holden

Yes. It was for those days. Well, as a matter of fact, in the earliest-- Through the remainder of the forties and the first couple of years of the fifties, though the staff had been pretty largely recruited and nothing seemed to change very much at the top, which was something of a question for some of us who thought maybe some day we were going to advance in the ranks of the planning staff--

Murdoch

Well, you did.

Holden

Well, it turned out that the war in the Pacific started up again in Korea, and one of the section heads was drafted to go off and fight a portion of the Korean War, which left an opening. One day, actually, more or less off a sickbed, I decided I'd better get up and go down and take the exam for that particular position. With a little good luck, I passed it and became number one on the list. Now, at that time, apparently, there was no particular favorite of those who might have otherwise influenced the appointment, [laughs] and I became the section head for the exceptions and special permits section. Many people will know this as the variance and special permits activity. So in about 1951 or '52, that's when I assumed that position. In any event, that brings up two or three points which I want to make about what was happening, in addition to the zone changes and the zone tightening that we were talking about. As for the attitudes of the planning commissioners and how you could handle those permits and exceptions at that particular period of time-- The first part of that, which is rather an interesting thing, was the so-called hog wars. Hog farms at that particular time were fed garbage primarily, and the garbage-fed hogs didn't smell very good. So there were a number of activities, and among them were attempts to revoke the automatic permits which had been automatically granted to existing hog ranches. Not the least of these areas were along the San Gabriel River, where it was an expanding activity. Now, that was a little bit before my time, but three or four of these continued to be major activities during my time running that particular section. We had some huge cases. A couple of them were in the north part of the county, actually, in the Santa Clarita Valley and above Castaic. These would fill the auditorium with people protesting or approving of the hog ranch. These were quite big operations and, consequently, there was a lot of jockeying around for a position as to whether or not they were going to continue to allow hog ranches in that, at that time, rather isolated area. We sometimes wonder about the reasoning, the actions that supervisors take in some of these activities. Well, in one of these major ones in the Santa Clarita river valley, the hearing was immense. There were a huge number of people before the planning commission. It had already gone through and been approved by the zoning board and the planning commission. Rumor had it that there were a lot of activities going on in that respect, most particularly with respect to one of the supervisors, who was out of that district. As the hearing progressed, it became obvious that the passage of it seemed to be a pretty good idea. So the vote came.

Murdoch

This was an ordinance to restrict hog farms.

Holden

No, this was an ordinance to approve this particular one, interestingly enough. But there was apparently some other altercation and series of events that I was not altogether sure of. Importantly here, what happened was that four supervisors voted for--

Murdoch

--the hog farm.

Holden

And this one supervisor, whose motives were rumored one way or another to be influenced by some of his constituents and others, finally threw up his hands and said, "I pass." He could not bring himself to vote for this particular hog ranch. What the background of that is is something that somebody else can decide in terms of the morality of this activity. So the hog ranches and getting rid of them was one of the activities that was important to the development of the region. Also, other activities of the old agricultural activity in Los Angeles County--

Murdoch

During this period, the staff was gradually re-zoning the entire county to bring it up to more modern-day zoning standards.

Holden

Well, the entire county south of the San Gabriel Mountains. We were not able somehow or other to get up into the Antelope Valley.

Murdoch

North county.

Holden

North county, Antelope Valley. As a matter of fact, as near as there was a Wild West in anything that I knew, Antelope Valley was it. In the early days, one of the fellows went out on a special permit investigation somewhere up in the north county for some obscure use and came back with a story that the old farmer shot at him. He wouldn't let him through the gate. That's the only activity that I remember of this kind, except that there were hearings held in, I believe, Lancaster at that very early time. The story was that General Fox rolled up his maps and came back to Los Angeles and decided that it was not yet time to zone Lancaster in a more definitive way. So the activity was basically south of the mountains.

Murdoch

Well, Milton Breivogel took over around 1954.

Holden

Actually, about 1953. That is correct. I just want to interrupt to finish the thought that I had about resources and the county's attitude toward them, which came up often as a question for the special permits section. I think it was a pattern. It was almost completely predictable. What I'm talking about is the

attitude towards the resources of the county, and there were a number. Oil wells were a very important part of that. Invariably when the environmental costs of oil wells and, perhaps, their [the oil companies'] conflict with residents came along, a decision was made which would allow the exploration and exploitation of oil. Now, it happened in a number of ways, among them two that are worth mentioning, one that I had a fair amount to do with. There was an oil field that actually existed in the La Habra Heights area of Los Angeles County, unincorporated area, in which a number of new discoveries were made and where there was no special zone to apply at that time, and besides which it was an area which was soon going to develop. As a matter of fact, it had quite a few houses in it. Well, the compromise at that time was relatively simple. At that time slant drilling was beginning to be a technical fact, and so a compromise was arranged where the companies operating in that area would locate their drilling rigs in a restricted area in a couple of places in the hills and slant drill from there. The rest of the La Habra area could develop to be the rather pleasant semi-rural, estate-type residential area. Well, this kind of thing could almost always be counted on. Now, I want to raise one other point because I think it's interesting to planning wherever, and that is that when you plan something and use the zoning ordinances and this kind of restricted activity, some strange things happen and some strange bedfellows enter into the picture. This goes back to the hog ranch situation. You remember I said that the hog ranches were, at that time, primarily garbage fed. At the time when it seemed like we were going to have just so many more revocation hearings for hog ranches, all of a sudden it became clear to the county health department that feeding hogs garbage was not a very healthful thing to do, that there was trichinosis and other things that were very difficult. That resulted in state action. The state passed a law that at all garbage-fed hog ranches, the garbage had to be cooked. That added an economic element. So what happened? Well, cooked garbage-- The other really halfway acceptable reaction to hogs was the grain-fed hog. These two things caused commercial hog farms to become essentially uneconomical.

Murdoch

In Los Angeles County.

Holden

In Los Angeles County. The result was that our great effort to take care of these problems suddenly collapsed, [laughs] and we had very little problem except for a couple of big hog ranches as mentioned earlier. So this became the way. The other interesting story in this was in the dairy industry.

Murdoch

The dairy industry was quiet strong--still is quite strong in Los Angeles County.

Holden

Yes. And there were interesting things happening in the dairy industries. Individual cows were producing more milk through various kinds of selective breeding and other activities. There were certain areas where cows seemed to prosper much more than others. One of them was Torrance, but Torrance was growing up pretty fast. The other one was around the city of Artesia. In this early development-- Well, Artesia was an unincorporated neighborhood community actually, and the dairies came in around the little neighborhood community of Artesia. In our zoning effort for that particular area, contact was made with all the dairy industries at that time. The so-called A2 zone--the county's heavy agricultural zone--was established in a doughnut-shaped form around the city of Artesia. This was one of the few times when the county or we on the staff ever had any great success in reserving areas for either open space or separating out the agricultural areas. Importantly, it probably established some kind of precedent for this region, which is a very hard one to overcome. It was not too long--maybe another ten to fifteen years or so or less--before the good farmers of that region looked around and said, "Well, things are getting even harder on us, more pressure, in spite of the fact that we've got your protection [a heavy agriculture A2 zoning classification]. Besides, the [Los Angeles County] Board of Supervisors is clear downtown. So what we'll do is have a special new city." So the city of Cerritos was created over the zoned area pretty much that we had originally created in the Artesia outlying area study.

Murdoch

That's very interesting. So there was a point when cities were created to preserve agriculture. I've never heard that story before.

Holden

Well, that was not the first one. The first one in Los Angeles County, or one of the first that I know of, was the city of West Covina. The city of West Covina was substantially an orange raising area. Why or what the causes were that caused a significant area to be incorporated into a city I'm not really very clear, but it was essentially a special-purpose city that was incorporated.

Murdoch

Well, around this time the outstanding planner, Milton Breivogel, took over, and you were working your way up as one of his captains. It was somewhere around this time that Planning Director Breivogel organized the county into ten planning areas. Can you tell us anything about that process, which was very significant?

Holden

Yes. That really relates to the fact that as a Regional Planning Commission, from the beginning there was some assumption that there would be a plan for

the county. Actually, in 1941 there was a land-use plan adopted. It was a very general plan of which, at one time, one of our major planning consultants derisively said, "That's no plan at all." It was a very general guide. What the land-use plan did do was to put-- What was done in 1941 was to organize a lot of research that was done in the thirties, including maps of the entire county, land-use maps in detail. Anyway, the expectation and the theory in planning was that there should be a plan and that there should be a plan for the entire county called a regional plan for Los Angeles County.

Murdoch

So the county was divided up into ten areas.

Holden

Yes. Milt didn't think he could get the backing, I guess, to do an entire plan. So he looked around the county and he said, "Let's take some reasonable physical areas"--the ten that you're talking about basically--"designate them, and then we'll do a plan for those areas. We'll do a research plan and then eventually an overall plan in cooperation with the cities and hopefully get them to develop it." He picked east San Gabriel Valley because it was next, basically, on the expansion horizon, most particularly the south part of San Gabriel Valley in the San Jose Creek area, the area from the outskirts of Pomona down through the valley clear through Puente. But he also needed the cooperation of more cities in the areas north of that and also in major unincorporated, orange-growing areas in the northern part of the San Gabriel Valley. So he proposed that we make a series of those studies and got staff approved to do it and looked around. He and I had had a lot of talks about a lot of things. Lo and behold, I became the director or the section head to conduct the first regional planning study here.

Murdoch

The first subregional plan. That is what we now call a subregional plan.

Holden

The idea, eventually, was when you got ten plans together, you could have--

Murdoch

You'd then have a plan for the entire county.

Holden

It was years later that, actually, a lot of that stuff was put together and a plan was adopted. By that time I was working for SCAG [Southern California Association of Governments]. Many things had passed.

Murdoch

Well, Director Breivogel once told me what a magnificent job you did on the area plans. Looking back, you were able to get so much done in a relatively short period of time, something like ten years. I'd be interested to hear more about how you turned out all these area plans. Who were some of your key



assistants? Did the supervisors support this effort? Tell us more about the area planning effort.

Holden

The important ingredient in this was a committee for each of these regions actually representing each of the cities in the region and a couple of people from unincorporated areas.

Murdoch

What later were called area planning councils.

Holden

Yes, the area planning councils. These councils really looked over our shoulders and what we were doing and gave us some really very good advice. With their help in sorting a number of things out, important problems in the area were identified and many of them were taken care of in good fashion. One of the major problem areas--and one that has a lot of interesting things with respect to planning associated with it--was the fact that two major railroads came through the city of Pomona and extended down the San Jose Creek area, the Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific going into L.A. The Santa Fe ran also through the area but north through various towns--San Dimas and on into Pasadena and down. Anyway, Milt was looking at that particular area and he said, "You know, if we're going to think about residential development up here, we've got to have some area for the work force, some area for industrial development."

Murdoch

Jobs-housing. A perceptive concept of jobs-housing balance.

Holden

That's the idea. In addition to that, it seemed to be an ideal area. He could drum up some support from the railroad representatives through that area and so forth. We also had a problem, however, in that we had to develop a liaison with the county air pollution control district. At that time the air pollution control district's primary attitude and philosophy was that the most likely way that we were going to get control of air pollution was through mechanical engineering solutions. They were interested in keeping the worst of the development industries and so forth out. So what we could do was to zone most of that area between the railroads coming down this strip into M1 or light industrial zoning. This was not a completely either scientific or positive thing. It was the best we could do.

Murdoch

Well, that strikes me as being very far-seeing. This was 1955?

Holden

Yeah. It was between 1954 and 1956. The plan for the valley was adopted in 1956.

Murdoch

One of the things that strikes me as so remarkable is that some regional plans were actually adopted or endorsed by the cities of the area.

Holden

They were for the most part. Well, actually, I'm not sure whether the Board of Supervisors--I'd have to check that--adopted that particular plan. But the planning commission did adopt the plan, and many of the cities gave their okay to what was going on. I do want to go back and talk about a couple of more things, planning considerations in respect to the industrial development and a couple of anecdotes that may be of some interest to young planners from time to time as to what happens in some areas. The first one was that we made a considerable study there of what might happen in this relatively new aspect of development called "the mall" and the regional malls, commercial, retail development malls.

Murdoch

Regional malls were quite a new concept in those days.

Holden

They had not been around for too many years. Slightly before 1954 the Lakewood mall was established. There was Framingham in the east and a couple of other examples countrywide. Anyway, we looked at it and how some of these were established and about what the population might be eventually. And [we] suggested there might be four of these that could be established in the east San Gabriel Valley, and some of our reasoning behind it is in the book. One of these was about halfway up the San Jose Creek area and had quite a service area around it. Another one we thought might be further west in the La Puente area. One was already developing in the city of West Covina. Our good fellow planner Gordon Whitnall was trying to and did approve work with one in Covina, which is an interesting technical case. He figured that this would be a success because he could draw a circle far enough around to include a lot of the area which was over Kellogg Hill and into the Pomona area. It turned out that that was never a very good idea. The Covina mall generally never did develop very much. The real mall turned out to be the one in West Covina, eventually. Also, the beginning of the latest craze, which was the special discount houses--they wound up in spaces that were out of the way and practically impossible to know or really calculate into your--

Murdoch

I didn't know we had discount malls in the fifties. That's very interesting.

Holden

They were just a beginning idea. It looked like not very much. We didn't think it would be a major mall area, but it turned out to be a pretty important sales thing eventually. So then I was out in the San Jose Creek area one day in an

area which was just to the south of where the railroads were, outside the boundary between the two railroads, extending to and beyond where we thought maybe the freeway was going through and which we didn't really think much about. We thought that a real small one would go in the north toward the Puente area, more on the north side of the valley. But a man stopped by, and I talked to him. Meanwhile, I had checked this area. It belonged to something called the Jockey Club. He'd come to talk about that a little more, this guy who showed up. What he told me was that he'd already contacted and had commitments for four department stores to locate in that particular region. Well, there I was. I didn't think that I was going to be in a position to stop the commercial zoning, even though it was south of the railroad. From him and from other sources I found out they had as many as four department stores who wanted to begin thinking about developing a mall in this rapidly expanding area. So that was the beginning of the development of the Puente Hills mall in that particular area. A couple of other strange things happened at that particular point. The idea of developing was evidently a good one for industry and things. First of all, we did get a lot of warehousing as well as some manufacturing. Secondly, there was an interest in having someplace for people to gather on the east side. Consequently there was a plan announced for a big hotel just to the north of this area on top of a hill. So this area was gradually beginning to develop into a real wild developing center.

Murdoch

It sounds as if your San Gabriel Valley area plan was just prepared in the nick of time before this flood of development. If it had balanced jobs and regional shopping and residential, that was quite advanced planning for its time.

Holden

Now, let's carry the thing through to what happened after that.

Murdoch

I think, perhaps, we should continue that on the reverse side of this tape.

#### **1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (July 24, 1998)**

Holden

All right. We were talking at the end of the last tape about the San Jose area, generally, and the railroads, the development in that area. The second follow-up to the plan that we had prepared was to zone the area we had designated for industry in that area and other changes in the unincorporated areas and hopefully to encourage the cities to adopt changes that were to be made.

Murdoch

To make the zoning ordinance match the area--

Holden

The plan, yeah. The county did adopt the industrial zones as generally presented in the plans and also the commercial zones that would accommodate the new center out there. That was fine. The next thing that happened was a series of particular events which are politically important but maybe not so important for the ultimate, long-term development of the area. The first thing that happened, of course, was that a bunch of people got together out there for that area and decided that they could control this new industrial area a lot better than the county could and they proposed a new city, the City of Industry. So it became a special-purpose city in the same area, almost identical with the lines of our industrial zoning. There were some exceptions, but not very many.

Murdoch

That's very interesting. You and Milton Breivogel were the parents of the City of Industry.

Holden

That's right. Now, immediately before this, some interesting things occurred. We had a vacant position for an assistant or deputy director of planning. I've forgotten exactly how the vacancy occurred. But all of a sudden, without any great announcement to anybody, we suddenly found that Mr. Robert Rope, I think his name was, was to be the new deputy director of planning. I subsequently heard that there was an oral examination and that he came out on top of the list and was reachable. I never got any announcement of Mr. Rope or of that examination. In any event, Mr. Rope came in, and he seemed to be interested in a number of things that affected the first district. Mr. Rope was with the Regional Planning Commission for a short period of time. When the City of Industry incorporated, Mr. Rope became the first CAO of that city. Now, I also have to complete this story to tell you about Mr. James M. Stafford. James Stafford was a planning commissioner.

Murdoch

A regional planning commissioner?

Holden

Of the Regional Planning Commission, that's correct, for a number of years about the same time that we were working on the plan. He was aware of what was happening and what we were doing and so on. We were talking before about how the agriculture had to give way to the urban development. One of the aspects of this was the change in the processing of beef, most particularly the fattening yards.

Murdoch

Feedlots.

Holden

Feedlots. Mr. Stafford was a major player in the feedlot business. I do recall talking to him one day when he said to me that it was a wonderful business

because it was a collegial one in which contracts for the shipment of beef in and out were word-of-mouth contracts and that they were inviolate and honored and that it was a wonderful operation in that respect. Well, a couple of Jim Stafford's feedlots were, of course, in the industrial area and were folded into the zoning, naturally, as non-conforming feedlots, which was all right. As in many cases of agriculture in this area, a solution other than zoning resulted in the demolition of the existence of feedlots. It seemed to be easier to feed these animals somewhere else. The old Cudahy activity resulted in the first special-purpose city here in Los Angeles. What did they call it? Cudahy?

Murdoch

Cudahy. Yeah.

Holden

Anyway, that had been around, a special-purpose city, for a long time. Anyway, the processing of beef changed. The feedlots went out. That was nice because we were having a terrible time with them, and that area would have, too. So time went on and I went on to other things, to the other area studies. Meanwhile, all of a sudden in this city, primarily industrial, there was a big stink about some things a little out of the ordinary going on. It turned out that Mr. James Stafford was brought up on charges of public corruption. This was the same Mr. Stafford who had extolled the advantages of the--

Murdoch

Handshake contract.

Holden

Handshake contract. That's correct. There are stories in the paper about Mr. Stafford's conviction.

Murdoch

What was the nature of the charges?

Holden

Public corruption. Working with and taking a handout.

Murdoch

You mean bribes to slant zoning in the direction that you want it?

Holden

Bribes to facilitate development of the area. Considerable bribes, apparently.

Murdoch

Let me digress to talk about politics for a second. At this crucial time in the early fifties, were there supervisors that--? You were telling me that some supervisors, one in particular, was very supportive of the planning process. So who supported the planning process?

Holden

Mr. Jim Stafford was appointed by the supervisor, and the supervisor himself was very supportive of the whole east San Gabriel Valley study.

Murdoch

As long as it was going in his direction?

Holden

That's right. And [he] took advantage of it in the effort to incorporate the City of Industry-- [tape recorder off] Well, the question was who supported the planning. There were some that those of us on the staff liked better than others. John Anson Ford was certainly one of them, very much so. We did, however, have primary relationships with the supervisors who had the two biggest districts, which were always the first and the fifth districts at that particular time and, to an extent, the fourth. John Anson Ford's district was towards the center of the area, and he was very good on some of the other things that the county got into from time to time, some of the social issues and so on. On the same thing, I guess, if you were looking at these people and their attitudes, you could characterize planning things that the city would do and would do extensively as compared to the county, where the county was more reluctant in certain areas. The most important of these would be such things as public housing, though the county did have a public housing program. One of the planning commissioners who was most involved in that kind of thing and subsequently took the job as director of the [Los Angeles] County Housing Authority was Lewis Kanaster.

Murdoch

He was a regional planning commissioner? I didn't know that.

Holden

Yes, he was. He was appointed, I believe, by Burton W. Chace. He must have been. I'm pretty sure he came from the fourth district.

Murdoch

Are there any other regional planning commissioners that come to mind at that time as supporting your planning efforts, particularly your area planning efforts?

Holden

One of the very best was Phillo. I think his first name was Robert.

Murdoch

Robert M. Phillo.

Holden

He was appointed when Warren M. Dorn became supervisor and replaced Roger W. Jessup. I have several stories to tell later about Dorn as supervisor. He was interesting because he was a major reason that we were able to develop a program at a later time to bring north county and the Malibu area up to date, but that's a little ahead of our story at this point.

Murdoch

Well, after the east San Gabriel Valley plan, then you did the east central area plan and developed a good working relationship with the cities there. Around this time the Lakewood plan was invented. Did the Regional Planning Commission have any involvement with that?

Holden

Yes. There's something that I would like to describe here in terms of Lakewood and the cities that has occurred to me over the years and I think probably is true and oftentimes is not mentioned in terms of cityhood. It begins with the fact that when I first came to the planning commission, there were not very many cities. There were about twenty-one or something--I don't know-- maybe a couple more or less. There hadn't been a new city incorporated in quite a period of time, and then just very sporadically. Lakewood was then about three-quarters developed by early 1953 through subdivisions. The big mall was in the city and so on. The city leaders there decided that the Board of Supervisors was too far away--the normal arguments--and that they'd like to do the whole thing themselves. So they started to explore ways to do it. As we have described before, you can have the whole urban development in the county through a series of things--special districts and county activities and so on. So the county, particularly some of the division heads, said, "Well, if we're going to have somebody incorporating like that, why we'll just offer to do this job for them." Some agreements were sought at that time. By a series of those agreements, the so-called "Lakewood Plan" was developed. It made possible a transition from county unincorporated activity to cityhood, really, because it provided services that it would take quite awhile to put together.

Murdoch

I think it fostered a rapid expansion in the number of incorporations because it made it relatively easy for a relatively small city to have a full range of services at, probably, an attractive cost.

Holden

Yes. This was one of the major reasons for the then gradually increasing incorporation of cities. The second was something else, and I don't hear it mentioned too often. That second item was that the state legislature passed a bill increasing the sales tax and allowed cities to have a portion of that tax.

What was it? Less than 1 percent or 1/2 percent.

Murdoch

That was in the fifties.

Holden

That's right. Without that there probably would not have been a big rush to incorporate. The idea of the Lakewood plan was possible, and it made it easier in that it gave a possibility to the transition, but it was basically the ability to transfer it to a city without increasing the property tax that was the final

economic situation which permitted cities. And considering that from 1950 thereabouts with just over twenty cities to the present-- I counted them off of a report that I had the other day from 1996. There were eighty-eight then. I think there are more now. The justification was local government. The economic possibility was the 1/2 percent sales tax. But the important thing for planning was something else, namely that almost all of these cities that were created were not created in undeveloped areas. They were invariably created out of substantial communities like Lakewood that were at least three-quarters up to 90 or even 100 percent developed.

Murdoch

In the unincorporated areas.

Holden

In former unincorporated areas. Therefore, in effect what I'm saying is that in the rapid expansion of a million people in this area in the decade of the fifties and again a million people in the decade of the sixties, almost all of that except for Los Angeles city and a little bit in Lakewood was in unincorporated area. So the county of Los Angeles, in effect, planned the whole damn region with the exception of the Antelope Valley with the area plans and the zoning and the subdivision controls.

Murdoch

Well, around this time in the mid-fifties, the federal government became supportive of local planning with the [Section] 701 [of the 1954 Housing Act] program, and I assume that gave quite a boost to your planning efforts.

Holden

Yes. I was looking around. I thought perhaps the east San Gabriel Valley was one of the first, but I don't think so.

Murdoch

No, I think that you started area planning before there was any federal help.

Holden

Yes, I think that's true, but shortly after that it came along and money was provided for county planning. I think it was on the basis of that that we got into this next major part of the planning and one of the major things that was going on at that time. That was that Milt Breivogel went up to Supervisor Warren Dorn, who had just in 1956 or so been elected, and he said, "You seem to be having all kinds of problems in north county. They're not really being solved. What we really ought to do is to zone that whole area. In order to give you a little bit more control, what we should do is to establish an emergency ordinance zoning the whole of the Antelope Valley not now otherwise zoned"-- meaning almost all of it-- "in the A2 zone." Mr. Dorn from this Pasadena experience thought maybe that was a neat idea.

Murdoch



And supported you?

Holden

He offered and passed the ordinance creating a temporary A2 zone. Well, what did an A2 zone do? What it did was made it impossible for anybody to do anything in the north county, effectively, in any development way until they finally settled on what kind of a zoning plan they needed or what kind of a general plan they needed for the whole valley.

Murdoch

Well, that was very pioneering because subsequently it became quite common that when you started a planning effort, or an updated planning effort, that you would pass an emergency ordinance, which did not require public hearings, to put a hold on them and allow the planners to do their jobs. So I would say that was a very significant innovation. [tape recorder off]

Holden

The reason that Milt looked forward to this was that in the lower half of the county, his area plans were going ahead. They were doing fine. There were beginning to be these outlined things. The question rose, "Why wasn't there really good urban planning throughout the county? What do we do about these little areas that are sticking around here, that need to be attended to?" He thought, "Let's do the whole thing up at once and do it right." So he included all of north county, the San Gabriel Mountains, Castaic, Santa Clarita Valley area-

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Murdoch

It included Santa Clarita Valley?

Holden

Yeah. And also the Malibu area, all the unincorporated area west of the city of Los Angeles. So he did that. He applied for federal funds, and he established a whole new division. Lo and behold, I became the division chief of that particular division.

Murdoch

A major responsibility.

Holden

It was quite a daunting deal. So one of my major accomplishments or claims to fame you might say, aside from some things about regional planning we will mention later, is that I wasn't the man who initially developed the zoning and so on, but I was the guy who virtually finished up all the zoning in the Los Angeles County unincorporated area.

Murdoch

This was the late fifties--

Holden

Yes, it was '57 or '58, somewhere around that.

Murdoch

--when you started north county and extending on into the sixties?

Holden

Yeah.

Murdoch

Well, who were some of your key staff members on this major undertaking and did you use any consultants?

Holden

We didn't use very many consultants except that we did employ somebody to do an opinion survey throughout north Los Angeles County, which was of considerable help.

Murdoch

Well, that was very innovative at the time.

Holden

It was very useful, as a matter of fact, as to what people were thinking and so on. [tape recorder off] The planning teams that were set up for north Los Angeles County and for the Malibu-- I was going to make some point now. Let's see.

Murdoch

Two separate teams.

Holden

There were two separate teams. We really started, basically, on north county first, and we did it in three parts and very similar to the east San Gabriel Valley in many ways--the initial research program, the general plan, and then a whole series of zoning activities to bring the whole area in line with the planning theory at the time. So that was the basic, general outline of what we were trying to achieve.

Murdoch

You had one advantage in north county because there weren't too many cities up there. Was Lancaster a separate city?

Holden

No.

Murdoch

Was it an unincorporated city? Or Palmdale?

Holden

I think Palmdale incorporated first. For some reason the Lancaster people were a little skittish about it. It is true that at that same time the county set up regional offices in Lancaster or included in an existing office a representative of the planning commission. So after that there was a permanent representative of the Regional Planning Commission in Lancaster. Perhaps Lancaster felt a little less anxious to be close to the supervisors for that reason. In any event, all

the things that one could say about zoning and so on-- Various incidents happened, very like in the east San Gabriel Valley. I found that it was not the Wild West that it really seemed to be, though we did have some pretty raucous hearings from time to time. We developed planning and research first, and then we started out and did several different sections for specific zoning ordinances. The main things that we were concerned with were these. First of all, even at the top of our activity out there and subsequent to that until quite recently, the population out there really hasn't been all that large. I think it got up to about one hundred thousand, as I remember, and so on. So one hundred thousand people in an area that could contain as many as are currently in Los Angeles County south of the mountains. There were not very many people. We had many, many acres of vacant land. We had all the problems, some of which I'm sure you had to contend with at your time and, I'm sure, even Jim [James] Hartel has today as director of planning--this question of illegal subdivisions and so on. I do remember an occasion in zoning where John Malone, who was head of the subdivision section at the county, and I were talking about what to do up there. I was wondering what kind of an area requirement to put on some of those areas, if any. So he looked around at it one way or another, and he said, "You've been talking about maybe two and a half or higher." He said, "Forget it." He said, "What we want is some area requirement that relates to urbanization. So you put a two-acre area requirement out there on all this stuff, and whenever these things come in, these two and a half acre tracts with almost no subdivision requirements, we'll tell him he has to get his zone changed in order to go for that larger area requirement." They probably could have done it anyway, but it was a good ruse, and I think it probably saved a lot of two and a half acre tracts, which had much less than the required and logical amount of improvement. But, actually, in the far reaches of the Antelope Valley, the question of premature and inadequate subdivision, evidently, is still a problem to this day.

Murdoch

You indicated that another major planning effort of the department at that time was the county-wide recreation.

Holden

Yeah. Let's get to the recreation later. I want to talk about recreation in general. In this particular case, it related to a couple of things in north county. We'll complete my share of that anyway. One of the major jobs obviously was to protect the Palmdale airport, and the real means-- Actually, there were two. As long as we kept some of the property at the ends of the runway in the A2 zone, and it was actually developed for agriculture, that was a pretty good deal. Heavy industrial zoning was the other tool that we used, primarily to the west side. Since the airport had its operations, the Lockheed [Martin Corporation]

plant, etc., its proximity to Muroc Air Force Base and the dry lake and the experimental stations, this was an important thing to protect. We had pretty good support for that, though some people wondered about it. As a matter of fact, the director of planning for Los Angeles, Charlie [Charles B.] Bennett, a good friend of Milt's, came out there and looked around one time. Then he kind of mused to himself and he said, "You know, I'm sure Milt realizes he's never going to see all of that industrial land develop." Then he said, "Oh, well. You know, there are ways and means of getting a job done."

Murdoch

Your efforts were very successful in protecting the glide path to the airport, and when you see all the controversy that surrounds all the other airports, it certainly was a job well done.

Holden

Yes. Subsequently to my plan, there was a complete second plan done which was contracted out. I was not really-- I was off doing something else at the time. I think it was probably an important plan in one respect; it was more related to the environment somewhat. There are two other interesting highlights on this and the Castaic, Santa Clarita activity. One of them is that peculiar situation in remote areas that you get into-- A part of our problem was to zone the little community of Gorman, which, you know, is at the top of the pass.

Murdoch

Near Castaic?

Holden

Beyond Castaic and over the Grapevine, up at the top and almost down the other side. Right at the top. It's a little place. I got a call. They wanted to have a meeting out there before we went too far. So I came out, and we had some ideas of what we were supposed to do. It was kind of a raucous thing. There were maybe twenty people there. They had all kinds of ideas about this little place. So after a day or two later I got a call. It was from a Mr. Ralphs, and I was invited to go out and talk to him. It turned out that Mr. Ralphs, who was either related to or actually did establish the Ralphs grocery store chain-- Actually, the Ralphs family there owned most of this community of Gorman. So I went to talk to him, and I talked to him. I showed him some of the problem areas we had where some people had been talking with us a couple of nights before about this. He looked at it and he said, "I think your ideas are pretty good. Now, I don't want you to worry about any of these people over here that are opposed to some of the things you're doing. When you come to the hearing, it will all be smooth as cake." [laughs] And lo and behold, when we had the zoning hearings on that particular area--smooth as cake. The old patriarch had everything completely in hand.

Murdoch

Perhaps there's something to be said for old style politics.

Holden

Anyway, there are all kinds of things that happen to you in planning. We did complete all the zoning and planning for north Los Angeles County. I suppose there are dozens of other things that we could talk about. It's just important to note--and it's important to me--that I had the interesting experience of being the man who really had the experience of finishing up the--

Murdoch

The first complete land-use plan and zoning ordinance for a comprehensive view of Los Angeles County.

Holden

And of those particular areas which were the most outstanding, not used.

Murdoch

Well, in the Santa Clarita Valley I think that you and the county also encouraged the family there--

Holden

The Newhall Land and Farming Company.

Murdoch

--the Newhalls, to prepare a new town plan which worked out quite well.

Holden

Yes, they did. They prepared a plan. I think the same thing happened to it that's happened to other such plans and several of which have been prepared around the region. That parent company had a tendency to sell off portions of it, and then the buyers developed their portions. But their individual development relates to their market needs at a given time, and sometimes they didn't always equate completely with the plans. So it's an interesting fact that sometimes these parcels of land were somewhat critical in terms of following the general plan and sometimes required extensive revision of the original plans. [tape recorder off] The other major area that we studied was Malibu. The question was, how did that get started, and why after all these years were we invited into Malibu to perform this study. I think that one of the major reasons, in the first place, was that one of the people out there who wanted to develop a small subdivision near the Malibu colony came in to see Milton Breivogel. What he really said was that all the deed restrictions established on a private lot-by-lot basis were expiring soon. A little exploration of that came to the point where we found out that historically the Ringe family had owned the entire Malibu coast clear to the tops of the hills, the old Malibu Rancho. There had been some development, but the old Ringe family held everything very closely under their control. They even started a subdivision along the beach in the thirties. They sold off parts of the land and issued some bonds in its development, and in the Depression the development went bankrupt. But the family retained a good

many pieces of property in Malibu as part of the settlement, and they also retained the water rights to Malibu Creek. So the family, interestingly enough, had to be contacted every time somebody wanted to build something in the Malibu area to assure that there was water available for the development. Every time they did that, the family requested deed restrictions on each lot. So, in effect, they were actually developing a kind of plan for Malibu over all of these years from 1930 on to the time we began to look at that area.

Murdoch

Nineteen-sixty.

Holden

Yeah, the late fifties and sixties.

Murdoch

The family was the local planner.

Holden

I got acquainted with some of them. I met Ms. Ringe--actually Ms. Adamson, originally Rhoda Ringe--the daughter of the original Ringe, the matriarch of that family. Rhoda spelled backward is Adohr. She was a big dairy owner. Her family also owned much property up in the north. I did visit them at the end of their pack-trail up Malibu Canyon in back of the big, high mountain with its chateau on top. We talked there about a number of things, and one of the more important results of that with Ms. Adamson was the fact that she had built a major house for herself, an estate-type house, on the beach, right on a curve of Malibu beach. A park [Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation] department man by the name of Dougherty, Frank Dougherty, went out with me. What we said was, "Well, what you're doing is you're complaining to us about all the surf riders next to you near the Malibu pier and about things that happened in the lagoon on the other side of you. Of course, you can fence your property off, but you're really not going to take over the surf and sand because that's state property. So we don't know what exactly you want to do, but we might suggest--since you may not use the beach that intensely and have these problems--that you might want to give the mansion to the county as a part of the development of the whole beach activity in Malibu." Well, we didn't hear a whole lot about that. We went about our business and so on, but eventually the whole mansion there came into county ownership.

Murdoch

That's a fantastic story.

Holden

As we zoned Malibu, we were talking about their practically having a plan through the deed restrictions. We, of course, knew what those deed restrictions were. We were researching as we were doing the zoning. It was amazing how well what they did lined up with what I wanted to suggest for various kinds of

development, particularly the commercial areas and things of that kind. It was kind of fantastic. They were really pretty good planners. There were in the Ringe family--rather, the Adamson family--two children, a boy and a girl. Now they're not children anymore. They're grown adults. I got a call along towards the end of this thing from Supervisor Burton Chace as a matter of fact, and he said, "Before we really go to a hearing on some of these zoning plans down there, I'd like to have you go out and talk to the Adamsons." So I did go out to their headquarters, actually of Adohr [Farms] milk, somewhere down south in Los Angeles. We looked at all of their properties and discussed the possibilities and so on. I didn't have any really great problems at all. It was one of those situations that could have been pretty hairy, but, actually, they were quite reasonable and minimal. We arrived at a very satisfactory plan for the several major pieces of property that they owned, and I was also able to give them some protection in the zoning our plan at that time proposed on a couple of properties that they were particularly interested in. All in all, it was a very interesting experience. Otherwise-- We were talking about supervisors. Burton Chace, who was supervisor of the area Malibu is in, was a very conservative guy. He was a Republican, but he was a kindly man and he had a good feeling about how to work with staff. He was the kind of guy who you could go in and see, and he might say, "Well, I'm going to have to vote for that," but that was it. He wasn't saying, "You're wrong." He wasn't saying, "If you keep on doing these kinds of things, I'm going to get you fired." He'd just say, "Yeah. I feel like I have to go another way."

Murdoch

Very nice.

Holden

So he did. I remember one of the major situations. Milt and I went over. He had an elderly man in his office. His property extended out to the ocean from Pacific Coast Highway. It was in an area we'd probably put in an A1 zone. We figured that eventually various things would develop, probably single family [homes]. But his property was right in the middle of this vacant property. This poor old man was putting up a great argument that he couldn't sell the property for much unless it was zoned multiple. What to do? It was obvious that Chace was sympathetic towards him. He said, "What can we do for this man?"

Another interesting incident about the adoption of that particular plan was that there were a good many points where people disagreed. Consequently, when we were holding the big hearing before the Board of Supervisors, I had to explain what the final commission's adopted plan was. Then we'd have a whole series of people come up and tell us how we were all wrong. Finally, Milt Breivogel got up and went over to Chace and he said, "Why don't we do this? Why don't you move the plan be adopted, but that all these controversial areas

be referred to the planning commission and set up as separate cases?" Well, Chace said, "That's a great idea. It will get rid of the A2 emergency zoning, and all these people will have a second chance to say what they want to say." That's the way it was handled. All these separate little incidents were taken--

### **1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (August 24, 1998)**

Murdoch

We were talking about your experiences as a chief planner with the Los Angeles [County] Regional Planning Commission in the mid-sixties. Tell us more about what the Regional Planning Commission was doing in those days.

Holden

Yes. We have already discussed the big project in its biggest parts in the north county and the Malibu area. In this big project, finishing up a major revision of the zoning for the county and a revision of most of the small areas that it had only very cursorily zoned, there were a couple of smaller items left, and those I'd like to start with this morning. Actually, they were not so small in a way: they were more unusual. In this same series of activities, one of the places that we looked at was Universal City. It was my first introduction in a lot of ways to the entertainment industry. It came about because of our basic program and some discussions that I had with the studios. Now, there are two aspects of this that I want to talk about really, and very shortly. One of them is the peculiarities of movie studios, and the second one is that the entertainment industry really has glamour-- In the second part--rather anecdotal-- In the first part, having decided that we should take a look at Universal City, we worked on what was actually going on there-- Perhaps a bit of introduction: Universal City, actually, is a small enclave of unincorporated territory bounded by Los Angeles city mostly and by Glendale and Burbank, relatively small compared to either one of these three places that I've mentioned, and almost completely, I think, controlled or owned by the studio interests. So the first thing we had to do was to go out and look at what was going on. And one of the first things that becomes clear about a studio is they do practically everything. They had a forge. They had buildings that had amazing structures, which were really quite a problem to any building inspector--how to handle it. Some very extraordinary things happened. They had explosives going off on the property. So they didn't fit any standard activity. So that was the first concern. Well, they had existed there at Universal City for a long time, because the county had done things to accommodate them. There was a fire department actually located on the Universal [Studios, Inc.] lots. I think there was almost a full-time building man to take care of any oddities that came along and to make sure that they at least had a good deal of flexibility to do what they wanted to do. Well, the more we



got into this particular situation, the more it appeared that the best really that we could do at that time was to look at some things that might help separate the surrounding communities from Universal Studios itself. So we put some commercial zoning along the side of the freeway through Cahuenga Pass. It didn't completely satisfy some of the people who lived across the pass, living in the hills. We put some large area requirements and residential zoning, which would severely limit the use of properties immediately adjacent to people on the southeast side. I do believe that this experience, plus at least one other that we had, did bring the county eventually to do some work on how a zoning ordinance could be better adapted to this particular kind of use.

Murdoch

I think you handled it with a conditional use permit, which I believe may still be in existence.

Holden

I think Los Angeles City does an overlay zone, which might be the best thing. And it may be that some places, maybe other counties or even Los Angeles County, permitted a movie studio in the A2 zone. Anyway, be that as it may, studios are in no way common activities. I might mention one other similar incident. Out in the Malibu area the studios have outdoor lots and these lots were used for the old-- I forget the name of the show-- The show with the Korean War medical [unit]. Anyway, out there are these camps in Korea among other things.

Murdoch

You mean the USO [United Service Organizations] troops?

Holden

No, the M\*A\*S\*H television series. Anyway, the important thing in that particular instance was that we came across the idea that somehow or other we had to incorporate this movie studio into the plan for Malibu, which, generally speaking, in that area had low activity agricultural uses with large area requirements. There we used a conditional use, not a conditional use permit, but a special permit--as it's known in the county.

Murdoch

Well, that studio that you helped start out in the Malibu area is now a tourist attraction where people go and visit.

Holden

It may well be. We were almost in trouble with our attorneys, because they thought it was a pretty large piece of property suddenly to put in a special permit. Anyway, we did it. We were warned, but nobody seems to have attacked it so far as a matter of law. I haven't been able to track that again to see what the current status is. As you say, apparently additional activities have gone on there in your knowledge or possibly in your time. But the last thing I

want to say about studios-- I was born, of course, and grew up in Southern California. I had almost no exposure to the entertainment business, and almost everybody in Southern California, actually, does not have much exposure to the entertainment business directly. So we thought, "Well, it's one of those things off there." I thought, "Well, okay. It's just another kind of activity." But I noticed that many people seemed to have a special interest in that. They all perked up and were excited when you talked about the entertainment business. Well, the workaday thing that we did out there, the talks we had, were mostly with studio lawyers and people of that kind. But I did get to drop in and see what was going on on the set of Spartacus, what was going on in other big films way back there and so forth. I did get to take my family and kids to the commissary when it was a real studio and not an entertainment activity. And naturally we planned a trip for the Regional Planning Commission, a field trip.

Murdoch

I'm sure they enjoyed it.

Holden

We went out there, and as we were looking around through the place, one of our guides said, "Now, wouldn't you want to talk to somebody? Perhaps we have somebody on the lot today that you would like to talk to." Well, you could see everybody perk up. Even the commissioners are not immune to this kind of thing. So-- "Yes, wouldn't we." So they said, "Well, it happens today that little Beaver [Jerry Mathers]--" A show [Leave It to Beaver] going on at that time, was available. And I looked around, and Mrs. L. [Lucy] S. Baca, who was with the group at that time, was just beaming. And lo and behold, they went out and they got little Beaver to come over and he talked for a little while with us. Everyone, every one of the commissioners, was paying close attention, and I was paying close attention. I don't know. And suddenly I realized that I don't think anybody's really immune to this glamorous side of the entertainment business.

Murdoch

I'm sure that's right. Tell me a little bit more about Mrs. Baca. She, I think, served as vice-chairman of the [Los Angeles County Regional Planning] Commission and chairman of the commission during that time?

Holden

She did for a long period of time. She was a long time on the commission. I can't really tell you about her leadership positions or when she might have been chairman. I don't remember. But she was there so long that almost everything that was available, she would have done. Basically, I think she was a pretty good commissioner. She tended to be quite personal in terms of the staff and other things like that.

Murdoch

Another interesting assignment you had in that time that you mentioned was Catalina Island [Santa Catalina Island]. Tell us about Catalina Island.

Holden

Well, I'm telling you about half of the story and [I will] indicate that there was a fairly good conclusion. It turned out that the city of Avalon was interested in some expansion and that William Pereira, the architect, was involved with some development in that area. So an unusual proposal was made that Pereira do some of the basic plan and that the county contract with the other parties and we did some of the implementations and planning in the sense of what the zoning ordinance might be and its changes. Well, that came about, and so-- because of my personal interest maybe more than anything else--I did do the first land-use surveys. So we flew over the island, and we examined the whole place in rather extensive detail.

Murdoch

What--you flew in an airplane? This was before helicopters, wasn't it?

Holden

This was in one of those old--

Murdoch

Pontoon planes?

Holden

Pontoon planes. Flying boats. That's right.

Murdoch

Wow.

Holden

There was a service from the mainland to Catalina which had those flying boats--two or three of them. They landed near Avalon. So we commandeered at least one of those for a while and the pilot, and we flew all over the island. We drove all over most of it also. Now, what actually happened was that then William Pereira-- One of his main interests was in developing some apartment-type buildings adjacent to the present development in Avalon, those that ran up against the hills. I had various interesting kinds of suggestions: running the buildings and tiers up against the hills, having little trams that run up and down the hill to service the apartments and so forth. Some of these, actually, did get built eventually. There was some expansion of the Avalon area. It was a town toward the east end of the area. At that time Edison Company was interested in taking over the supply of utilities for the island.

Murdoch

Edison provided, and I think still does, a full range of utility--water, gas, electricity. That was very unusual, I thought.

Holden

That is correct. They had a desalting plant and so forth. It was never tremendously large, however. The other interesting area, and I think the area that developers were interested in, was the isthmus area. Here again, provisions were made so that the flat land in there, that area, could be fairly readily developed for housing, vacation housing, regular housing--for anybody who wanted to live on the island.

Murdoch

That isthmus area was the site of the 1930s movie Mutiny on the Bounty.

Holden

I think probably it was. The movie industry, not only there but also speaking regionally on some of the island up to the north--

Murdoch

It occurs to me that they did cowboy movies, and that's why to this day we still have bison--buffaloes--all over the island.

Holden

That's about true. Yes. In any event, there were two things that happened at that time which rather limited the further thinking of development. One natural thing--that some of those hills are pretty darn steep out there, and the way of getting around-- I think the fact that that's an island which is quite a ways from Los Angeles would attract some people but not others. It is true that they improved communication by subsequently providing large ferry boats, but not anywhere near the kind that were originally used.

Murdoch

Well, one limiting factor is the water supply. Desalinization is a very expensive process.

Holden

That's right. That result was that the more expanded ideas of the expansion never did generate, and the county working with the interests that owned the property--that would be the Wrigley interests--made an agreement first to have the county--

Murdoch

Was that on your watch that that exciting Wrigley agreement was developed?

Holden

Yeah. I think it was just afterwards.

Murdoch

Oh, just afterwards? Your plan may have--

Holden

Inspired it.

Murdoch

--influenced it, and that is very exciting.

Holden

At any rate, it was a good deal. There was an agreement to maintain openness and so on, on the island. And I believe--you can carry on this one, finish the story--the land was eventually ceded to the county, was it not?

Murdoch

No, it's still--

Holden

UCLA conservancy trust--?

Murdoch

--in the trust.

Holden

You worked on it subsequently?

Murdoch

I subsequently prepared a plan for Catalina Island, and it was a very interesting experience. We flew over with helicopters with the whole planning commission, and then later there was an accident somewhere else and the commission got a little bit squeamish about flying around--

Holden

Taking a helicopter ride [laughs]. That's very interesting.

Murdoch

--in helicopters. Well, another interesting assignment, which was a key unincorporated county area, was East Los Angeles. Tell us about your East Los Angeles plan.

Holden

That was an experience with, perhaps, a more definite ethnic community than any that I had worked in. It was rather a continuation of the original project.

Murdoch

The county-wide land use--on planning-- Yes, go ahead.

Holden

Yes. So we had to go out there and see what we could do, in this whole, established--pretty well established--community. I suppose a few remarks about it would be in order. My impression at that time was that the leadership in East Los Angeles and extending out to the east was topside and fairly shallow in some ways. Art [Arthur J.] Baum was an important player, and he owned the newspaper. There were three or four judges and other people who had Spanish surnames.

Murdoch

I think the auditorium at the East Los Angeles Community College is named-- Baum donated the money, and it's named after Arthur Baum, a generous man.

Holden

Yes. However, at the time we went out there, we decided, mostly in conference, that we would have instead of a committee to review the zoning, that we would go out with some big, well-advertised hearings. So we did.

Murdoch

Workshops?

Holden

Workshops. So we did have that first hearing, and guess what? It seemed that about half the community showed up. The animosity toward downtown in a number of these groups was rather significant. So actually, what we had to do-- We listened almost all night--well, it was around towards twelve o'clock-- before we could close up the meeting, and we found out in this big meeting a number of places where our problems would be. What we obviously had to do was to have then a whole series of smaller workshops and see what we could do to talk and work out some additional problems with some members of this community.

Murdoch

I know exactly what you're talking about, because even twenty years later, we heard a lot about Chavez Ravine whenever we worked in East Los Angeles. I do think that the citizens of East Los Angeles were imposed upon in the old days. All the freeways go through there and all the freeway interchanges. That was, of course, before your time. \*[At this time I was reassigned, and the job of completing the East Los Angeles unincorporated study was completed, I believe, under Joseph K. Kennedy's direction.]

Holden

I have one other interesting anecdote, however, that we can add to this, which occurred, I think, somewhat earlier. That's when I was in charge of the special permits and exceptions section. There had been an exception presented, filed, by a man just off of Atlantic Boulevard to the west and north of what would be--well, anyway, Sixth Street or something like that. Anyway, it was a request for a business in a residential area with signs and other things that go with such a business. Some of that subsequently is permitted in a residential zone, but in this particular case it looked fairly significant. It was also about six or seven houses up from the first commercial zone along the boulevard. So the commission dutifully turned it down, and the general theories of planning would find it natural--

Murdoch

This was an inappropriate spot zone proposal. Good for the commission. So then what happened when it got to the [Los Angeles County] Board of Supervisors?

Holden

So it was appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Murdoch

Naturally.

Holden

I got a call from Hugh Dynes, who was then the chief deputy to I think it was Legg. The supervisor Herbert C. Legg, [Frank G.] Bonelli, and then [Peter F.] Schabarum were in the first district. Hugh Dynes was a principal deputy there for a long time. Anyway, I went up to Hugh's office and he went over two or three things with me and he said, "I've got an interesting one here. Tell me about it." So I explained to him what had happened, why it was turned down, and so forth. He looked at me and he said, "Well, you know, that sort of makes some sense." He says, "What I want you to do is to go out there and talk to this fellow." Then he said, "If you can persuade him that this is the proper thing to do, for him not to do this, then we can go ahead with this. Otherwise, I'm going to have to take that up to Legg and get it approved." So I did. I went out to talk to this fellow. He listened to my story quite respectfully, and he said, "Well, Mr. Holden, I think you don't realize that things are a little different down here. I think-- I'm pretty well known in this community. People come around and talk to me all over from this region, and I like to know where they are. This is a convenient spot. I don't think Herbert Legg's going to object to my having this activity in this particular spot. I know that you have certain allegiances, grandiose things, standards that you use, but--you know--I just don't understand why it should apply in this particular case." And that was his position. So I went back to Hugh Dynes, and I said, "It seems to be a rather special case. I certainly can't persuade him not to go ahead."

Murdoch

I think it was outrageous to even be asked to go and persuade a developer not to do something that he wants to do. You would have one chance of a snowball in hell of doing that.

Holden

What Hugh wanted to do was to show me that this particular guy was a real power head from the ethnic background point of view, and as a young planner it was a pretty good lesson.

Murdoch

Well, and it was subsequently approved?

Holden

It was subsequently approved.

Murdoch

Now, the developer said, "I don't think that anybody is against it," but did you have any testimony at either of the hearings against it?

Holden

Sure, and the whole thing followed normal hearing practices.

Murdoch

Played.

Holden

Well, some. Not very much. It was such an outrageous location--that was the problem. But this kind of an activity and what we would consider an outrageous location was what this guy was saying didn't apply, he thought, to his community and his leadership position.

Murdoch

Well, of course it applied.

Holden

Well, of course it applied.

Murdoch

Do you suspect that he made political contributions from time to time?

Holden

I'm sure he got many votes for whomever he supported for the Board of Supervisors, which is a government unit.

Murdoch

Tell me more about-- Well, Hugh Dynes worked for a number of supervisors.

Holden

Did he? I thought he was primarily first district.

Murdoch

No, no, no, but I mean, in the first district--

Holden

Yes.

Murdoch

--he stayed on. What was the series of supervisors again?

Holden

Legg was the first that I remember. After that, Bonelli, and finally Schabarum.

Murdoch

Well, I knew Hugh Dynes when I first came to the county. He took me out to lunch.

Holden

Did he?

Murdoch

Trying, I guess, to get me started in the right direction, but that's a different story. What was your reaction to Bonelli?

Holden

Well, I think they're all pretty much the same. They were quite interested and personally acquainted with a lot of the developers in there. At that time, there were a lot of individual developers rather than the big outfits that operate today. I would say one other thing. This leads us to the question of whether there were



illegal activities in the county and were some supervisors crooked and all this kind of thing. I want to say that, in my time, the professional departments seemed to be pretty clean. I did not know of very many, if any, actual incidents.

Murdoch

All of California and Los Angeles had a reputation in those days--post World War II, we're talking about--for being quite clean, and I know from personal experience [they were] very clean compared to the East Coast, where I had worked in New Jersey and New York and West Virginia. But nevertheless, campaign contributions always play a role in planning, even in Los Angeles.

Holden

That's correct, but the other thing I want to add on that is that the professionals were very much able to work with the supervisors generally, and they said, "Well, I know you know that this is against the basic theories," as in the case of East L.A., "but I'm not in a position to tell the supervisor that he cannot do something. He is the elected representative."

Murdoch

Planning always has a very difficult problem of serving a number of different constituents.

Holden

Yes, that's correct.

Murdoch

Tell me about Ted [Theodore] Lumpkin.

Holden

That's a good story here. Ted was black. He was a very smart man, and he took examinations well. The thing that I wanted to remark about in general was the fact that pretty much the Regional Planning Commission was color blind. As a matter of fact, I don't really know any incidents that were of great significance. This particular situation was that Ted passed the civil service planning exam and he was assigned to my activity. At the time, the major part of my activity was in the Malibu area. The Malibu area was a rather rich, almost lily-white area at that time. So I looked at Ted, at the situation, and I thought, "Well, I don't want to bring any real hardship on Ted here. I think I'd better talk to Milton. We should be of common mind as to what's going on here." So I went to see him. God bless Milt. He said, "You know, he passed the exam. He's supposed to be qualified for this job. I've assigned him to you. Use him every place that you would use a planner." That's exactly what I did. I sent him out. I introduced him the first time when he went out to one of these contentious little communities, actually in the Calabasas area, and--bless his heart--he did a wonderful job. And that's my story about Ted Lumpkin and the basic approach that the county Regional Planning Commission, and particularly Milt, had to the whole question of color.

Murdoch

Good for Milt and good for you. Tell me more about the supervisors at that time-- Burton Chace and then Kenneth "Kenny" Hahn came over from the city.

Holden

Let me talk about Hahn first. This is a particular incident. I think it was Joe Kennedy and maybe someone else was with me, and we were looking at a big empty piece of property, actually under government ownership, down in Lawndale. It was destined to be a large park and about to have a golf course. While we were standing around--

Murdoch

Where was this located?

Holden

Lawndale.

Murdoch

Oh. Lawndale.

Holden

While we were standing around, Kenny Hahn, Supervisor Hahn, and a couple of other people showed up. I'm not sure why they were there; I guess they were doing the same as I: looking at the property. So he stopped to talk to us. Supervisor Hahn liked to tell people what he thought, and he was pretty gregarious. He started to lecture us on his points of view about government.

Murdoch

He loved to do that.

Holden

Yes. He started, among other things-- There are two things that I remember particularly: the first thing he said was, "If you give constituents parks and roads, then they will get you elected."

Murdoch

Well, he was a master of local politics. There's no question about that.

Holden

So then he started to talk about relationships with the staff. What he said was, "Well, I like my staff and the department heads, the people in the county, to come up with great ideas. I like them to bring up the best possible thing and the expanded things we can do." Then he says, "When they bring it over to me and to the supervisors, that's when I can knock it down to where we can--"

Murdoch

Actually do it.

Holden

--actually do it." Now, this is not too odd a point of view among politicians, but there are various ways of exercising it. Kenneth Hahn was not above doing that in a situation where the department head or presenter for the staff was

standing up there trying to defend his plan. And that is an awfully embarrassing position for a staff member. Not always was that true, but-- He did have some very good deputies, and I must say that some of his points of view, I thought, were better than those exercised in some respects by some supervisors. In contrast to this, Burton [W.] Chace, as a supervisor, was a man-- He served the whole beach area, from Long Beach on clear around here to the county boundaries, as a matter of fact. There are a lot of difficult problems in that area, but I never knew a situation where Supervisor Chace in any sense deliberately put the staff in a compromising position. In other words, although some things may not have gone as well as some of us liked, we were not compromised, and he was an easy man to work with. Now, that's two different styles.

Murdoch

That wasn't necessarily true of Burton Chace?

Holden

This was true of Burton Chace. It was not particularly true in some instances of Kenneth Hahn. This was the difference. I just want to contrast them for a difference in approach.

Murdoch

Ed, you mentioned the name Victor York. Tell us about Victor York. Who was he?

Holden

I'd like to, because Victor York was one of the more interesting and unusual planning commissioners--that I knew. Victor York was a rough-and-ready man, self-educated I found out, and he was described one time to me as a minor oil man, perhaps as a minor oil millionaire. He, as I was able to observe, had a number of oil wells, that was for sure. As a matter of fact, he gave one away one time to the Salvation Army, which was one of his favorite charities. Victor was unusual in a lot of ways. He was uneducated in the normal sense, self-educated in the best sense. He had kind of a fierce sense of fairness and of independence and he could be-- But before we leave the oil thing, I'd like to point out that Victor told me the story one time of how he located oil wells. He used a dousing stick very like you might use to locate water, and apparently it worked quite well. What I noticed from his stories, however, was that, invariably, where he was using the dousing stick was on the periphery of an established oil field, which kind of looked interesting to me. He didn't leave it all to the dousing stick. He had a nice selection of areas to begin with. Anyway, he was a kind and generous man also and always picked up the tab for anything that anybody was doing. He subsequently donated one of the fields that he had acquired in his oil activities to the city of Whittier and it became what's known as York Field. The other thing I wanted to talk about with respect to Victor was that he, along with other people earlier--for example, [Roger W.] Jessup did

more or less the same thing-- Victor would periodically have a big meeting of people that he liked in government, and he would invite particularly the first district supervisor, but perhaps others that he cared to. He invariably had the sheriff there. He had a lot of local officials. He had department heads and a few who might have particular interests in some area at that time. What he described to me one day relating to these meetings was-- He said, "You know, a lot of people come and talk to me about things. They want favors of one kind or another, or they want me to go in and talk to the supervisor and so on." He said, "You know, I don't like to do that." He said, "I think there's a better way. So what I do is I have these big meetings, and I tell these people to come and talk to me." He said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll invite you to a meeting that I'm going to have very soon. It's going to be a luncheon. You'll have a good time." He said, "At that meeting, you're going to have all the people that you're interested in talking to." He said, "If you're really interested in talking to these people, you go ahead and talk to them." That was his position with respect to influence, one way or another.

Murdoch

It sounds like a very good innovation.

Holden

I'm sure Jessup had the same kind of thing when he had those big parties.

Murdoch

What district was York? What area of the county?

Holden

He was the first district.

Murdoch

The first district?

Holden

Yeah, the Schabarum--

Murdoch

So he had been appointed by Bonelli?

Holden

Bonelli or Legg. I think, probably, Bonelli by the time he was appointed. But, you know--

Murdoch

Very interesting.

Holden

His range of acquaintanceships was, of course, considerable. He was a very good friend of the then sheriff. I don't remember which sheriff it was. Very much so. Anyway, just an anecdote of one of the more colorful commissioners.

The only thing I'd--

Murdoch

You wanted to tell us a little bit more about your major-- Of course, one of the key positive things of the Regional Planning Commission was its act of major highway planning and the master plan of highways, and you wanted to tell us a little bit more about the growing traffic and what happened in La Mirada.

Holden

I guess the point I want to make--because who knows who might be reading this someday, including, possibly, future planners--and the subject really that I wanted to talk about was design in planning, which, sometimes, and perhaps even through the course of this particular discussion, we didn't hear very much about. There were instances when some rather big design considerations did come into play. In my opinion, it may be that subsequently, when many of the concerns that I've been talking about may have been in some ways met, that we may get back to a good deal of the actual design effort by planners working for--as [they] are now--private parties and for other redevelopment and other activities related to planning, which I had not too much direct contact with. We did, however, have a couple of interesting examples, particularly in the traffic areas, in how subdivisions were designed and what kinds of compromises were made in their design. We were able to influence traffic problems and the relationship of very busy streets to the residential communities. These, actually, in most cases, were a matter of an expansion of the theory of the super block and of controlling the exterior edges, particularly in favor of the more fast-moving traffic.

Murdoch

Well, the [Los Angeles County] Highway Department [Metropolitan Transportation Authority] worked with the planners of the county doing a good job in laying out major routes that separated major traffic from minor traffic.

Holden

That's right. That was a part of the original planning. I did notice on coming up here on Crenshaw Boulevard that almost every house had an exit driveway directly onto the street. This is probably the worst possible way of designing for major highways and traffic and is avoided in planning subdivisions today. There were other examples of good design. In the San Fernando Valley, the service road was the major--

Murdoch

Innovation.

Holden

Innovation.

## **1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (August 24, 1998)**

Murdoch

You were telling us about subdivision and highway design. Carry on, Ed.

Holden

Yes. While I was working in the unincorporated La Mirada area at one time, Milton Breivogel got together with Newt[on] Templin, who was then the-- Templin was the road commissioner, and they decided, since this was a large piece of property--once the McNally Estate--that they would see what they could do about designing these super blocks to better protect highways and people and so on. They decided, also, that they would try to make the entire development of a single type back-up design, where interior housing would be backed up to the major highway and a wall would be required. If one visits La Mirada, you'll see these pretty much today. They had a couple of problems, not the least of which was, "Who's going to own this wall?" They could get it put up by requiring it to be a part of a subdivision design. That was the reason for the cooperation between the [Regional] Planning Department and the road department. And it was successful. So what to do about the wall: Who was going to pay for it? Well, the subdivision developer was going to pay for it really in the additional construction, they decided first, but they did put it on an easement and required the wall to be there. That's more or less where they left it.

Murdoch

So the wall is actually built on a common easement.

Holden

On private property.

Murdoch

It's not a part of the adjacent block?

Holden

On private property. So the question was then, "What would happen to these walls over a period of time?" And if you go down through La Mirada, you will find that occasionally there is a wall that is in pretty bad shape. But, of course, what happened mostly was that the responsibility of the subdividers passed on to the individual home owner to maintain the wall. Sometimes, in a few instances, they didn't do it. But for the most part, the whole town of La Mirada is an interesting total example of this particular kind of design.

Murdoch

And this was one of the first instances of that, was it not?

Holden

Yes.

Murdoch

So it was quite an innovation at the time.

Holden

Yes, and of cooperation between county departments--quite interesting from that point of view.

Murdoch

Well, you and Milton Breivogel did a great job of working with the other county departments, and I know from personal experience that's not an easy thing to do.

Holden

Sometimes not an easy job. That's right.

Murdoch

Ed, you were a key actor in park planning when you were a planner with the county. Please tell us a little bit about your efforts in that arena.

Holden

All right. Well, the first item that I wanted to talk to you about a little bit is one that rather tickles me because it got more into implementation than planners often get. In this particular case, the county did, from 1948 on, have a local park plan. It was down to details on how many acres various park sites needed and to a few generalized location dots, etc. The problem with local parks as compared say with schools was that in the school situation, the state had managed to look further ahead and pass bond issues which provided money while areas were expanded so that school districts could dig into that fund when they truly needed to buy school sites at the same time as areas were being developed. But there was no such fund for parks and, consequently, the funding of parks was very off and on, up and down many times. At one particular moment, somewhere back there, about the middle of my tenure with the county, word came down that this next year's going to be a pretty good budget year and we're going to finally do a little bit about catching up with local parks. Now, I suppose this would fit in very well with Kenneth Hahn's "What makes voters happy" idea, but in any event the time had finally come. So the park department [Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation] and the representative of our planning department, which in that case was me, and I think "Joe" [Joseph K.] Kennedy were involved in park planning along with us-- And our problem was to go out and specifically designate properties consistent with the general plan of parks for acquisition. And so we did prepare a neat little, rather inconspicuous, typed report that listed just a large number of local parks.

Murdoch

For the unincorporated areas--

Holden

For the unincorporated areas.

Murdoch

--of the county.

Holden

And in many, many of them--places like Cudahy, which is a little, little place, or in east Whittier, where, under a previous administration, the park for that area had somehow been moved up into Hacienda Heights instead of being down where many people really needed one, south of Whittier Boulevard-- So we located one where it really should have gone. And you know what? Over a period of years, most of those specific places were actually bought and developed by the parks department. It was really a neat little thing because of all those-- It was sort of hands-on work. Sometimes planners don't get that chance to see the specific implementation of their general plans.

Murdoch

Well, it should be a source of great satisfaction to know that you created the local park system, and all those people that have enjoyed it all those many, many years since-- That this was so successful, did it encourage the region to take more interest in parks?

Holden

Well, I don't know about that. I do think that the purchase of parks kind of dropped off and then it goes up and so on. Now, we want to talk more about regional parks and expansion of the region. The first comment, of course, is that Los Angeles County-- The supervisors decided, being buffeted around a bit by cities, that the one thing they really could spend county money on without getting too much criticism was regional parks, and within regional parks that activity which paid for itself was, of course, golf courses. So we didn't have a lot of trouble, sometimes, selling regional parks to the supervisors. Everybody wanted one, and every so often they felt like they'd like to have one named after them, like the Schabarum Park.

Murdoch

Or Bonelli Park.

Holden

Or Bonelli Park and so on. So we did get some county parks, which were called regional and were substantially recreation-type parks. We are not talking here about a more difficult problem called open space, which a number of people to this day mentioned as one of the problems of the Los Angeles region--that somehow not too much attention was paid to actual open space for people. The subject, I think, can be argued in some ways, but it is true that we don't have urban separations of open space such as the plans that occurred in England. But we do have a number of regional parks. We have had a major effort to use areas which, under flood-control activities, would have water on them in a major flood period but are significantly most of the time dry. We have in this region a number of very large spaces, such as the Whittier Narrows and in the city of Los Angeles, the Sepulveda Basin.



Murdoch

That's near Pico Rivera?

Holden

Yeah. So things of this kind.

Murdoch

Well, those settling basins or replenishing basins do provide useful open space.

Holden

They certainly do.

Murdoch

Aside from their purpose of providing us with a water supply.

Holden

That's right. So they serve a number of purposes, including some of the recreational purposes. Anyway, that's happened and it was a good thing and it was a pleasure to work there. The one I want to talk about now, however, is the fact that in the early days, in the late fifties and early sixties, it occurred to a number of people, some supervisors, certainly to Milt Breivogel, that there were important reasons for concern about the park's picture in the region. I suppose he was thinking at that time of the surrounding four counties plus Los Angeles and not necessarily including Imperial County. Milt was thinking regionally in a number of ways. It was at this same time that he had created, which we were talking about earlier, a council of planning, which included planning directors of the surrounding counties and representatives of cities, and in many respects it was set up very like the soon to be SCAG [Southern California Association of Governments] organization. But it was strictly informal, organized by Milt in the initial instance, by the director of planning of the biggest county, and incorporating interested counties. All of them were interested. All of them had some elected official, also, in addition, who was interested--

Murdoch

I don't think it would be going too far to say that the council of planning was really the precursor of what later became SCAG.

Holden

That's right. It fits into that point of view here directly. In any event, two major studies of this kind--regional park plans--were carried out. The implementation was left largely to the counties, but the plan in Los Angeles County was adopted in 1963 by the RPC [Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission], as a matter of fact. So there was considerable interest in it. It was a response to a regional need. Open space and parks is a continuing part of the regional concern, I think, at least of the metropolitan area.

Murdoch

Do you recall the name of the 1963 plan?

Holden

Its exact name sort of escapes me for the moment. It was a plan of regional parks for the Southern California region or something very similar to that.

Murdoch

Very significant.

Holden

Yes. Of course, Los Angeles County did have its own county plan of regional parks. All right. The importance of that is that basically, along with the creation of the council of planning, they began to have the earliest awareness of regional planning in this region. What also appears to be true is that as various important regional issues began to come up, we added increasing technical and professional interest in regional planning but usually with particular individual emphasis. We can review some of those because they're all precursors to the regional idea, which began to become important and began to impinge on the thinking of many of the public and private administrators and elected officials and so forth. To mention a few, obviously, the county of Los Angeles, acting in a regional capacity, had talked about some of the activities that immediately impinged on regional planning and this led to the concern, of course, with flood control, smog--really imaginative activity by the county in the creation of the Los Angeles County Smog Control District [now the South Coast Air Quality Management District]--waste management in a series of districts, water policy, pollution control in other areas, support of the Metropolitan Water District [of Southern California], etc., going clear back into the thirties. But now we are beginning to have other major concerns, not the least and probably the most important in terms of development of regional interest was the federal government and that, at this time, money came down to the states and then to the counties and eventually to the cities for major highway building. It was not too long before the period that we're talking about, in the late forties, when the interest in freeways became dominant, and in the early fifties the idea of a national web of highways and important corridors for U.S.-wide communication-- And in California, the state took on the job of doing what before had been undertaken by counties, for example, their highway plans. Indeed, Los Angeles County did have a plan of freeways as a matter of fact.

Murdoch

They were very advanced.

Holden

These plans were then absorbed into statewide plans. But then things began to happen in the East and particularly in places where the old system that worked so well for a long time and served Los Angeles County no longer seemed to work. That started to be noticed in other places as well. The first thing we began to find, professionally, was the espousing of big area studies, regional

transportation studies primarily. These were substantially to include entire metropolitan or regional areas.

Murdoch

I think Chicago was one of the first.

Holden

Chicago was one.

Murdoch

Detroit.

Holden

But, particularly, I remember Atlanta and Minneapolis among others. In the Bay Area, the first work on such a thing was organizing the Bay Area Council of Government and so forth. So we had precursors to the regional organization building that came later, but most of the money for these later regional and metropolitan plans came from the federal government. So the federal government, with prodding by a lot of the East Coast organizations, including particularly some from the New England areas, like Rhode Island or Massachusetts, Boston-- New York didn't have any governmental unit that could encompass their entire metropolitan area--substantial parts of it maybe, but a lot of it not on the map, so actually private regional planning had taken place there earlier. But these people, for example, played a prominent part in pushing for certain actions from the then democratic regime in Washington-- And the result of this is that in the writing of the transportation laws, we got, first, the [Section] 701 [of the 1954 Housing Act] program under one of the housing acts, which provided money for local planning and, soon thereafter, regional planning. It started in 1954, I think, if my history is correct. Then, through thinking about that, and then the idea a few later years leading up to the sixties, maybe in the sixties or so, the idea that we should have regional agencies at least to review facilities that the federal government was putting out so much money for. As we will see later, that involved more than transportation and was a large part of the early work of SCAG. But what we're talking about now is that these things, while they related very closely to our region, they were slightly different and we were a little bit later in thinking about some of them because of the previously built-up relationship, in Southern California particularly, among the counties and the state.

Murdoch

In one sense, Southern California had a head start, even going back to the creation of the first regional planning conference in 1921, and then you're saying that in another sense, because we had that, we weren't so quick to jump on this--

Holden

It's also true that this relationship was a state-to-county relationship for the distribution of money, for many things--for flood control districts, for traffic, etc. So the biggest county, Los Angeles, we can add, was looking down its nose at the possibility of a wider regional jurisdiction, which was going to take over its natural functions previously developed with the state. But the state had taken over freeway building, and they also became interested in, technically--the professionals in the state departments--the big studies that were being carried on regionally in several areas of the U.S. So what do we have? We have the creation of a highway district covering this area within the California Department of Transportation, which in turn created an organization called LARTS, L.A. Regional Transportation Study. This, once again, was somewhat regional and somewhat informal in nature, inasmuch as it was centered in the [California] State Department of Transportation, but it was recognized that in order to get the land-use input and other important inputs in terms of policy considerations on which to base any estimate ultimately of trips and hence the need for freeways, they would have to develop some kind of cooperative entity. A ready-made one, of course, was the council of planning and the county planning agencies.

Murdoch

Well, Ed, before we get onto a really key thing, which is your key role in the establishment of SCAG, the Southern California Association of Governments, I'd like to spend just one more moment on the county. When you left the county to go with SCAG in 1967, I believe, what was the size of the Regional Planning Commission staff in round numbers as you remember?

Holden

It was over one hundred. I don't know quite how many.

Murdoch

Over one hundred and going strong?

Holden

Going strong. Milt was director still.

Murdoch

Well, let's turn now to the creation-- You were in on the creation. Tell us about the creation of SCAG.

Holden

To really round out the picture, may I go back just a minute?

Murdoch

Oh, by all means.

Holden

Go back to Los Angeles County, what was happening to the metropolitan area, namely its expansion. I think it's fascinating that in 1940, there was no county in this region that was over two hundred thousand in population other than San

Diego and other than Los Angeles. Los Angeles at that time, 1940, immediately before the war-- I think I have a figure for comparative purposes-- It had two and three quarters million people. That's compared to anybody else's two hundred thousand. By 1950, the population of Los Angeles expanded to slightly over four million. By this time, Orange County, I think, was the only county that had finally risen to a population of five hundred thousand at the same time that L.A. County had established four million. But there was no other county that had exceeded two hundred thousand, but some were approaching this figure. So the point I'm making, of course, is that Los Angeles was a giant, and the rest were pretty much followers. But the other ones were rapidly receiving more development, and this is what caused the shift in effect in the consideration, particularly technically and by professionals, of the needs for regional planning for certain activities as, particularly, transportation planning-- Air pollution came to crop up as a major problem. And so forth.

Murdoch

And air pollution began to be recognized as a problem larger than just Los Angeles County.

Holden

Larger than just the county in spite of the county's extraordinary leadership ability. That is correct. Now we're back on essentially. Then what happened? In 1960, Milt was working with various political people on that question of the founding of some kind of regional agency. At this time there were two major political groups talking about some kind of regional effort. There were key people in all the counties. I mentioned some of them to you another time-- Maybe we'd better repeat. Paul [J.] Anderson was an important one. He was primarily involved in the regional parks.

Murdoch

What was his home base?

Holden

He was from Riverside County. Dave--he's from Orange County--Baker.

Murdoch

David [L.] Baker.

Holden

From Orange County. And Dan [Daniel] Mikesell from San Bernardino County. There were city people. I suppose we ought to review quickly, because this all relates to why an agency exists and who your clients are if you're trying to direct or you're trying to develop a program. A couple of things were happening at the same time. In the county situation we suddenly had a Supreme Court decision that said one man, one vote. What that meant in effect was that smaller counties with smaller populations, because they had two representatives in the [California State] Senate, as every county did, and inordinate power-- At

this time with the one man vote, they realized, many of them, that that power would probably dissipate a good deal. So the people down in Imperial County, for example, were seriously concerned that they were going to lose that power at the state level, because certainly they didn't have substantial population. So they didn't have anybody in the [California State] Assembly, and they were going to go way down in representation in the senate. So when they started talking about a regional agency, we found that Imperial County was interested. San Bernardino County was interested, in a way, because they're a huge county in terms of land area, and Supervisor Daniel Mikesell, with whom I worked closely for a few months, worked very hard with the state to provide money for some of these outlying county areas-- How do you provide enough money to run a road across most of the Mojave Desert, particularly if it is a local road? Maybe one or two major arteries were of interest to the state and then what? So he was interested in how to gain more power so that they could continue to get money that didn't relate to the number of population they had but more to the possible future development of areas. So these county members were not our opponents. In Los Angeles County the support was rather thin, but I think from the beginning Supervisor [Warren M.] Dorn, for whatever reason, liked what he had seen and what Milton recommended to him, even though it must have caused him terrible problems later when we had all those temporary zones, while we were doing a project to get changes in the zoning of the whole north county and so forth-- But Supervisor Dorn seemed to support SCAG, was one of the few early participants and a president of SCAG in the early years. Otherwise, I think there were other supporters. But it is true that you couldn't get three votes for joining SCAG in 1960 when all the others were interested in forming the organization. Nineteen sixty--excuse me. Now, the other group that was primarily interested in SCAG and its organization and function were cities, and most particularly the local branch of the League of California Cities, which supported a regional, locally organized, regional agency which had some representation for cities. That plus the mayor of the city of Los Angeles, who had obviously great interest in what happened around the city and some of the major issues at the time.

Murdoch

Was that Mayor [Samuel W.] Yorty at the time?

Holden

Mayor Yorty, yeah. And along with him and a major spokesman, Councilman Tom [Thomas] Bradley.

Murdoch

Later Bradley.

Holden

In the formation stage.

Murdoch

Bradley was the councilman?

Holden

He was a councilman.

Murdoch

He supported-- So both Bradley and Yorty supported SCAG.

Holden

And generally the cities supported the formation of SCAG.

Murdoch

Well, that's very interesting because Yorty and Bradley didn't see eye to eye.

Holden

Maybe in some things, but I think they were together on this. I think. Anyway, they certainly both voted for it at different times. So I remember in the final formation stage-- By the way, Milton and I were talking about possible programs for SCAG, to some extent, earlier than this. Because of the very preliminary stage, it was clear that some 701 funds should be available to start some kind of planning programs at SCAG. I was then in charge of advance planning for the county. Anyway, I did attend one of the major formation meetings at the Ambassador Hotel. I remember Los Angeles County was now represented [as well as] most of the other counties and the whole city support team and a few opponents, and a really eloquent speech was made by Tom Bradley. I have seldom heard, and I have heard many political speeches, but none quite as impassioned and elegant as Bradley's speech in favor of the organization of SCAG.

Murdoch

What year was this--'62?

Holden

I believe it was '60.

Murdoch

As early as that?

Holden

No, wait a minute. It was in '66. I'm sorry.

Murdoch

'Sixty-six.

Holden

I was thinking of something else for '60. Let's revise those dates for the formation of SCAG to 1966.

Murdoch

Well, then SCAG was created by an action of the state legislature.

Holden

No, no. SCAG was created by an action of local governments in its original form. It was created under the joint powers arrangements, a state law which local governments could use in order to carry out some functions. The law was probably supported originally by local governments so that they could do things they didn't want the state to do. [laughs]

Murdoch

That was clear. Yes.

Holden

So SCAG is now an organization. It's supported locally. It has appropriated some money, not very much, enough that would basically support a director and a secretary. That's money that came from all these counties and cities, but importantly it was the local people and local agencies that created the original SCAG and within less than a year. I don't remember the exact time. The county of Los Angeles was late in joining-- There was then a vote of the supervisors in Los Angeles County, and they subsequently joined, I think, because--again--of money and transportation and other concerns, where they needed to tap into somebody else's supply, since the county itself was beginning to be fairly limited in the funds that it could generate itself.

Murdoch

I think that that is absolutely right. I've heard tales that the county highway department felt that they could have more influence with SCAG than they could have with the state highway department, which turned out not to be true, but that was their thinking at the time.

Holden

That may be, at least, closer to home. But the department heads in the county seemed to have a perpetual pass on the airplanes to Sacramento, but that's another story.

Murdoch

So in 1967--who was the first director--? I should ask you.

Holden

Well, two items. The first one I want to talk about is at this time one of the pressures on the county was the fact that federal legislation now required a review by a regional agency of all major regional projects.

Murdoch

The A95 review process.

Holden

The A95 review process. Now, it didn't last a terribly long time, maybe four or five years at the most, I think, as an instance of regional government. Other things took its place, but it was important then because some of the projects all these people wanted had to be reviewed by a regional agency, and one of the first times I met the first executive director, Will Smith, was when he carried



into our back office an A95 application and asked our help in preparing a report--

Murdoch

The first executive director of SCAG.

Holden

--that's correct--an A95 application, which he was personally reviewing and asked the county for a little bit of help to get these things out so that the executive body of SCAG could quickly review them and get things underway, which we obliged. Now, in the meanwhile, money was available from 701 for the initiation of some kind of a program. Will worked with Milton Breivogel and myself and we developed an initial 701 program for regional planning for SCAG and this was granted at the federal level early in the next year.

Murdoch

Nineteen sixty-seven?

Holden

Nineteen sixty-seven.

Murdoch

Was "Cal" [Calvin S.] Hamilton part of your committee? It seems to me he was.

Holden

Later. Later. A part of our program, the first 701, was to get it started, to hire three or four people to do an overall view of transportation planning and to get started on some operation and economic review so we'd have some basis and money to develop a further, more expanded program for SCAG.

Murdoch

Well, at that crucial moment, SCAG had the good sense to hire Ed Holden as their chief planner.

Holden

So that's what happened.

Murdoch

So you were in at the beginning.

Holden

I was in at the beginning. So we, of course, had to go through the initial processes. I didn't develop our personnel program so much as consulted with it and used it to hire the first few people in SCAG and to organize the real first expanded program of SCAG. In view of the clients of SCAG, it seemed quite reasonable that we should pick some of the major planners in the region and ask them to help us form an ultimate program for SCAG. And the chairman of that committee, of course, was Calvin Hamilton. Well, I didn't have many people working for me at that moment. So the next thing was "Well, what are we doing? We've been talking, some of us planners, all the time about all this

special advanced work that generated out of the war, the think tanks and all this sort of thing. So why don't we go to one of these think tanks or two of them and see what they might offer in terms of some advanced thinking to help us develop an appropriate program for SCAG."

Murdoch

How interesting. I didn't know that.

Holden

So I've forgotten exactly-- I want to say Rand [Corporation], but it wasn't Rand. It was one of the others. Yes, TRW, Thompson-Ramo-Wooldridge-- But anyway, there were two very important people with SCAG that happened to be working for this particular think tank, and those happened to be Bill [William C.] Ackerman and Frank Hotchkiss. So Bill Ackerman and Frank Hotchkiss-- Frank Hotchkiss had an extensive background in architecture and in planning. In many ways he was very suited to this kind of work. Bill was a good administrator and very apt in organizational functions and so on.

Murdoch

And you added them to the staff?

Holden

Well, eventually. After this program was all developed and adopted and we got the money, one day I thought, "It would be kind of interesting to have these guys actually on the staff to help me work on this." I don't know which one of us mentioned it first, but I think probably Hotchkiss was sitting in my office one day. We were talking and he said, "You know, it wouldn't be too bad to work for SCAG." I thought, "Oh, boy. Now we have an opportunity here." So we formed an alliance, and both of those two gentlemen came to work for SCAG as it turned out. So I had my individual think tank right there in SCAG.

Murdoch

Well, you certainly brought on some very bright staff people. By then it was 1967?

Holden

Late in '67, early '68. Now, at that time, SCAG did not have any guarantee of money coming in for the transportation effort, but the federal government was at it again. And being as how in many parts of the country their distribution of funds were to affect the region, particularly the freeways, which had no single governmental structure that could handle the whole thing, they managed to put in a requirement that state expenditures on transportation had to be reviewed and approved by a regional agency. So the [California State] Department of Transportation started nosing around on just what they should do and how they should organize this thing. They found, as they had already in LARTS, a ready-made council of planning and now had an organizational structure that they might work with. At this point, after a couple of years, SCAG still pretty much

had a very rudimentary review process and was doing initial sorts of foundation studies. So at that time--I'm not sure of the exact date on this--the Department of Transportation came looking on behalf of the state. Dan Mikesell, who had always had a close alliance with the state--

Murdoch

What was that name again?

Holden

Dan Mikesell, who was a supervisor of San Bernardino County, got quite interested in this question. He was an advocate of SCAG's taking on this job, because it was closer to home. The other thing that happened was that Will Smith decided-- You asked me what his background was. I'm afraid I can't really describe it very much. I think he was a successful director of SCAG for this early, early effort. Anyway, Will decided he would prefer Monterey County as a working site, apparently, to Los Angeles.

Murdoch

When he left--

### **1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (October 21, 1998)**

Murdoch

As we ended the last tape, we were just getting into the very exciting period when SCAG [Southern California Association of Governments] was created. You played a key role in those early days. Please tell us more about the early days of SCAG.

Holden

I think, Norm, that on the tape we did discuss this somewhat and particularly the background situation-- the technical aspects that encouraged the development of some kind of regional program. SCAG eventually was formed. Will Smith was selected as the first executive director. It was himself and one secretary that for a short time ran SCAG and took care of the first reviews that the federal government required for the transmission of funds down through to local areas. At that time, of course, the federal government provided for [Section] 701 [of the 1954 Housing Act] programming and funds for regional planning. Between Milton and myself, Milt Breivogel and myself, we developed an initial program that SCAG might adopt. We did--submitted it to federal government under the 701 housing-act section--and we were granted approval and the program for SCAG was started. I think we covered, in addition to that, the fact that we then developed a more elaborate program pretty much headed up as a committee by Calvin [S.] Hamilton and where Frank Hotchkiss and Bill [William C.] Ackerman from one of the think tanks we really employed as our advisers on this-- If I hadn't mentioned it before, it

should be noted that both Frank Hotchkiss and Bill Ackerman were subsequently employed as members of SCAG. As the war effort and more funding for these kinds of activities declined, they apparently thought fit to leave that particular kind of work and did come to work for SCAG--Bill Ackerman in the transportation program and Frank Hotchkiss was my assistant. Will Smith, I think, did a very good job getting the program started at SCAG. You, of course, have to realize that in 1966, when SCAG was first adopted--that is to say, enough cities and counties according to SCAG bylaws signed up to be members of SCAG--there was no official staff at that time. It was volunteered by various members of governments, one way or another. So with strong support and, significantly, from many outlying counties and with not very much enthusiasm from the county of Los Angeles-- There were [some], such as [Warren M.] Dorn, who supported it. It was supported by the city of Los Angeles. That was an important item. Somewhere along as this program was beginning to be developed pretty much along the lines we've already discussed, Will Smith decided to leave. He wanted to go to, I think, a somewhat smaller jurisdiction. In any event, he moved to Monterey County, where he had been offered a job, and soon left. Now, at that time, in 1968, I believe, or slightly before-- Nineteen sixty-eight. Tom [Thomas] Bradley was president of SCAG at that particular moment, and he was still, I believe, a councilman, I think--I would have to check that--in the city of Los Angeles. We now had the occasion to find a new executive director for SCAG. One of the supervisors from San Bernardino County was rumored as being interested in it. There were various questions as to whether a former elected official of that kind should be a director of SCAG, and other possibilities were investigated. Among the people looked at was Ray [Raymond] Remy. Ray was working for the local division of the League of California Cities. He had a very good reputation among city members and, of course, therefore, among members of the executive committee who were looking for a director and were a little worried about what the various points of view were with respect to hiring a new director. The net result was that Ray Remy was appointed. I believe that year was 1968, the beginning of the year, and it's interesting to me that the 1969 annual report for SCAG then showed Remy as the executive director, and it showed Daniel Mikesell as president of SCAG. The power struggle, if there was one, may have been somewhat settled by this kind of compromise.

Murdoch

What were your initial impressions when you first met Ray Remy?

Holden

Ray was a young man. He was only thirty-two years of age when he became the executive director of SCAG or within a year or two of that. He was young and gung ho. He had all the confidence in the world, and he was about to build-

- He was in the mode of organization building. He thought that SCAG had the opportunity to grow in an area that he was quite interested in and where he could see a great deal of support for the cities and some of the counties who wanted to have a hand in what SCAG might do to have an influence on various activities.

Murdoch

Transportation development.

Holden

The state and federal government passed money for various kinds of activity. So Ray was right with the spirit that SCAG was conceived in from the beginning, in two ways. First of all, as a preventative of worse things, as effectively, members of SCAG-- And in Ray's mind, I'm sure, [there were] the positive aspects of what SCAG might accomplish. We should go on in that particular vein. Before we do, I think there are two things with respect to Supervisor Daniel Mikesell that I want to report--anecdotes.

Murdoch

Well, he was one of the early presidents of SCAG.

Holden

Mikesell was--yes.

Murdoch

What was his home base again?

Holden

San Bernardino County. He also was chairman of the California Supervisors Association Committee on Transportation, I believe. One of his major interests was getting enough money and enough assignment of activity to build roads in the vast expanse of San Bernardino County, which is the largest county in land area in this immediate area and has a huge back area that could never be supported on the basis of a per capita allotment for the building of roads through and much less within the area. So Dan was always interested in planning. The instance that I wanted to remark about is that there was a three months' interim period between Will Smith's departure and Ray Remy's taking over the reins of the executive director. I had the, perhaps, less than envious job of being the interim executive director. There were two things that happened during this period, one of them included the major annual meeting date of SCAG, which involves a lot of administrative activity, organizing the whole thing, holding sessions and things of that nature. Anyway, going back to Mikesell, during this same period there had been a lot of discussions with Will and with the Department of Transportation of the state [California State Department of Transportation] about ways and means of answering the needs of the federal government in terms of offering money through the transportation plan to various communities within the state. It's not impossible

in my mind that a somewhat reasonable distribution of that money could be made if it weren't for the fact that at the federal level, they were thinking about responsibility for serving large distributions of populations. There was quite a demand for some kind of regional effort. It related, in many cases, to states that did not have within their own borders complete urban areas. Consequently, for a lot of reasons, these federal requirements began to develop, not only for the A95 process, which would follow, but also direct allocation from the federal government to the local agencies. The opposite of this, of course, was the big demand that a lot of this be allocated through the states instead of through regional areas direct. This would switch back and forth as an idea over time.

Murdoch

It was a tumultuous time for transportation planning. This was the era of freeway revolts.

Holden

That too, but also still a large demand for funding. It was also a time of consideration for national highways. They were interested in interstate activity, passing through lots of money not only for freeways, but also for not local highways, but for major and secondary highways, such as were represented by the plans of counties substantially. Anyway, Mikesell and I, during this interim of three months, met with representatives of the department of transportation of the state. Essentially we sort of batted the whole idea around for a while. Mikesell was well known because, as I mentioned before, of his association with the supervisors and his great interest in road building in San Bernardino County. So at the end of this thing, I was a little bemused because I was not completely sure what had been accomplished, except there seemed to be an agreement out of that meeting that SCAG was to get a large amount of money for transportation planning. This is, of course, the way it worked out. I want to report that at the end of the meeting, as we were leaving, Mikesell turned to me and said, "Well, Ed, you've got your program."

Murdoch

Great.

Holden

It was essentially the final decision among staff at the state level and ourselves as to the transfer of monies to meet the federal requirements. So SCAG now had not only a 701 planning program, but it had a transportation planning program established. For the record I would like to note how significant that was, because there were many COGs [councils of government] around the country that were not given the responsibility of transportation planning, and there would be a dual organization. So that was really a very important coup to insure that land-use planning and transportation planning would be under one organization, namely SCAG. Now, the next thing that I want to add is an

incident that relates to just politics and the egos of individual people and perhaps justifiable-- We were talking one day, Mikesell and I, about that time. At that moment, a bigwig in the Department of Transportation at the federal level [United States Department of Transportation]--I don't remember who it was, probably the secretary of transportation--was making a visit to California to check on things. Mikesell was complaining rather bitterly-- What this man did, instead of coming to the man who at that particular moment was probably most powerful in terms of actual freeway money and local money distribution, representing the supervisors, who were to get most of this money anyway-- other than the state-- The secretary followed protocol, so-called, and he had to visit in accordance with his protocol the mayor of the principal city, which was the city of Los Angeles for the region. Surprise, I know. The transportation director never visited with Mikesell. It's kind of an interesting sidelight on some of the problems of big egos in the development of various programs.

Murdoch

The East Coast politicians never understood the relationship--the strength of county supervisors.

Holden

I think that's very true.

Murdoch

I can add to your story: When there was such a big fuss and feathers when, I think, foreign dignitaries visited the Los Angeles area and would always check in with the mayor-- And I think this in the eighties resulted in the [Los Angeles County] Board of Supervisors creating the office of protocol for the county of Los Angeles to insure that visiting dignitaries would appreciate the importance of the Board of Supervisors.

Holden

Yes. Anyway, going on. The other thing I want to remark about this interim three months is that I got to work fairly closely with Tom Bradley, who was then president of SCAG. We were about finished with the whole annual meeting. We were, I guess, meeting here in town again. The annual meeting, I think, was concluded in a big hotel--I've forgotten which one at the moment. I think the one in the City of Industry. Anyway, later I had a meeting with Bradley, and we were finishing up the matter. It had been a pretty long three or four days to get this thing over with, satisfactorily over with, as an administrative activity. I guess I was feeling tired and I said, "Gee, I sure am tired." Then I looked at Bradley, and I thought to myself, "Oh, my. That man must be much more tired and worn out than I could ever hope to be." So I said to him, "Well, I guess that wasn't so good to say. I'm sure that you're a lot more tired after all this and with the additional council meeting." He said, "Well, yes,

I'm rather busy." That concluded that particular conversation, but it was kind of interesting--

Murdoch

I take it he was quite supportive of SCAG at that time--

Holden

Absolutely supportive of SCAG.

Murdoch

--and a key figure in getting it rolling?

Holden

Absolutely, and we discussed that a little bit, as I remember, last time. Okay. Moving on. We were talking about SCAG's background and support awhile ago. As Remy came into office and with his penchant for organization building and thinking about it, I think from the beginning what he considered was that he would like to get SCAG established with some of its functions and recognized by the state government. This had not been possible in the past. I think it goes back to a penchant of state government then and now that the general approach was the formation of very limited-purpose agencies for activities that did not fit easily under city, county, or state departments. It's been a long practice at the state level. Consequently, almost every regional activity, activity as opposed to coordination, had been to create special districts. You can name a dozen any way you want-- individual transportation agencies for various purposes--

Murdoch

Water districts.

Holden

Metropolitan water districts.

Murdoch

Mosquito control districts--every conceivable thing under the sun.

Holden

If they couldn't make it a part of the county government or the city government, it was special purpose and with a different boundary, etc. This has real consequences for this region and was the opposite of what the federal government was in effect looking for in a lot of ways and one reason why SCAG had support from the federal government in its formation. So there was a lot of support for some kind of law to support SCAG in its role. It's probably wise to remind people that its basic formation was under state law, but a general state law which allowed cities and counties to contract almost any kind of activity and, consequently, they contracted together to form a regional agency which they called the Southern California Association of Governments or SCAG.

Murdoch



Was this a joint-powers agreement?

Holden

Yes. That was how SCAG was formed instead of as a corporation. So it was the desire of various interests to build up power, steam, to try to get SCAG more officially recognized as an overall planning agency. So as a consummate politician himself and administrator, Ray did take great pains to cultivate a whole series of the original people who formed SCAG and many others. He had friends in the League of [California] Cities. He had friendships in many organizations and a number of county board members, even though we were still having a little trouble with Los Angeles County and still some trouble with Orange [County] and others who liked their arrangements with the state. But we had these prevailing regional problems which were not easily settled on the county level. So I recall a huge conference we then had, an annual meeting actually, where a representative from every city and every county was present, and it was held in Palm Springs. We had a well-directed presentation to this group of the important things that SCAG should be doing--a description of SCAG's then established transportation program and the actual regional planning program and a number of other special activities which looked to be possible in the future. After that meeting we got, I think, a unanimous vote of the member representatives present to present a law--

Murdoch

A legislative program.

Holden

--potential law to the legislature for adoption. I didn't spend very much time on this, but, of course, Ray did-- [He] spent several hours in Sacramento on this. We did get a sponsor. There was good support for this along with other agencies which had activities going on in the regional field at that time.

Murdoch

What year was this, Ed, about?

Holden

That would have been 196--

Murdoch

'Sixty-nine? 'Seventy?

Holden

Probably '70--'69 and '70.

Murdoch

What happened?

Holden

Unfortunately, in spite of what I think was a masterful effort, the activity foundered on the same principle that we just discussed. They would not create a permanent planning agency.

Murdoch

A comprehensive body--?

Holden

An organization that might have some reach over several different single-purpose activities. But as Ray said when he came back, "I didn't get the single law for SCAG, but I did get what at that time the legislature was considering-- namely, what agencies should indeed be the agencies to act for the required review of the state distribution of funds for transportation planning." So SCAG was designated in that law as a coordinating agency and recognized in that respect in state law. It has been a safeguard and a support for SCAG.

Murdoch

I would say a key element in SCAG's survival. So Ray Remy got half a loaf.

Holden

He got half a loaf but a very important half, and it has been sufficient to keep SCAG alive in effect and not to have it completely vitiated by other activities as time went by. Now, onwards and upwards to the plan. What kind of a plan did we have; what were we working on? We can go to 1972. At that time, SCAG published what they called a Regional Development Guide and represented our best thoughts at that time about regional planning and how we should really approach this particular problem. It had a lot of units within it which really represented basically a lot of planning theory together with various planning elements coordinated together as a general plan. We can discuss some of them and how they were done and what was happening. Listed in the 1972 plan, which was adopted by the SCAG executive committee-- It was also adopted by a number of cities and several counties in the region. First, its basic characteristics-- To begin with, it was the result of a goals program, as a matter of fact, and you'll find in the 1972 adopted edition a set of goals for practically every regional issue and possible future plan that you might be looking for. We can review a few of these quickly.

Murdoch

Please do.

Holden

The first was a land-use and form plan. This could be interpreted really as a distribution of population plan. Where did people live in this region, and what was the distribution? How many were there? This is over time, in each year, revised in its estimates related to the transportation plan, particularly because it was the basic foundation for one leg of almost everybody's trip. Trips were, of course, then accumulated, applied to transportation corridors, and you could then begin to tell how many lanes of highway you would need, where you needed a freeway, etc. So it's fundamental to transportation planning. It was not altogether something that SCAG did by itself, particularly in estimating current

population, which is a starting point, because more and more the state found that it was allocating funds, redistributing property tax funds and other things. So the state got into the business, at least, of estimating current population. And of course we have the census and other studies and estimates. So it was possible for SCAG, with not a completely overwhelming staff, to take a pretty good stab at developing these figures, working with cities and counties to a relatively fine level, at least to the census level, sometimes below. Now, this was also compiled, and really in its final form for us was an expression of population. It's worth noting that Frank Hotchkiss, bless his heart, imaginative guy that he is, used to preach every day that population distribution is a matter of policy. It's not a matter of projecting only the natural expansion of particular areas. Consequently, in the development of our plan here, if you look at it, there are several interesting options for the possible development of the metropolitan region. Now, I think Frank was right in a lot of ways, but I think we have to, in looking at the policy question, go back a bit, and I think a lot of planning and, to an extent, some of our estimates depended significantly on this question of what was desirable and what would be a good policy for the region. Because I think that policy that affects land-use and population distribution is made up of many, many subpolicies. If one or more of these subpolicies becomes very effective, it is likely to influence development in ways which some of the broader policies may not particularly equate with. Let me illustrate in two or three ways. Let's see. First of all, it's true that in this area, there have been a huge number of decisions early on which really reflect a policy that the area should grow, which have made possible the development with proper infrastructure and most services almost anywhere over a period of time, anywhere in our metropolitan region-- There have been very few places where we have been able to restrict development because of the absence of proper infrastructure. An example of where it was tried for a while is in the Malibu area, actually, and we've discussed that a bit. Until Malibu was able to get itself incorporated into a sewer district and a water district outside of Malibu itself, it didn't have enough water to expand. It did get itself incorporated, and at that point its population was capable of being expanded. Other than that, and a few times when population expansions or urban development has been limited in this area, it has been for short periods of time. There have also been some limitations which we described back in our discussion of Los Angeles County. All of their deterrent activities have been for a short period of time, and consequently there's never been a concentrated effort to preserve open space other than the possible purchase of land mostly related to parks. As nice as it would be to have had a more aggressive and positive attitude towards this, the very fact that open space is often not regarded as a benefit in itself is an expression of policy going back a long way. What I'm really saying with

respect to policy in terms of allocating land use is that, if you're really talking about this distribution and particularly if you express an idea that you want to change a major direction of growth or that you want to limit development in the area specifically by a policy statement, if you're at odds with some of these very basic policies--not expressed probably, but held--which you can see out there, you're going to have a hard time implementing your policy. Now, let's talk about another example. One of the policies with respect to population distribution and that relates to transportation planning particularly is expressed here and I think is probably expressed very much lately in SCAG work--Namely, we are coming to a point where land may become scarce in a lot of areas. In order to accommodate future development, we should encourage land use, encourage residential development to be a greater density in many specific areas. We should do this so that in the long run we can reduce traffic congestion. People can use transportation more readily and altogether it would be less expensive because there would be more use of public transit. This is expressed in here, the 1972 SCAG report. It's a basic idea that is based on a common concept.

Murdoch

Well, I think that the goals that you set forth in the seventies now are coming to be recognized as essential to the future. In this--

Holden

Let me finish an idea, Norman, and maybe a point of view, actually. My point is that this particular idea--it has and still is in my opinion substantially running against unexpressed policies about development and about the way people live and how houses are built in our area. Among other things, if today you look out around Los Angeles, look south from a high point or from an airplane, it's flat. There's hardly any construction in residential development that's over two stories and not very much of that. Well, there is beginning to be more and more multiple development, but it's likely as not to be two stories or less. There are a lot of reasons for this. People don't seem to like to live in high-rises. There are some exceptions to that, and there could some day be more. I've noticed in traveling abroad, which I've done recently, that when we have a lot of seven-, eight-story residential buildings, we seem to have a limitation on where people park their automobiles. As a matter of fact, they have fewer automobiles. Well, while we may say this is good, it does not appear to equate with the basic idea that most Angelinos have with respect to their love of the automobile. Now, there are ways to solve this in a way, because if you look in West Los Angeles, where we do have a number of apartment buildings, we have a garage underneath--same in the San Fernando Valley and so forth. What it means, in that sense, if that is really true, is that the basic desire, the unexpressed goal, is to have a convenient way to have your automobile and have it close to where

you live. That is still a very dominant idea in the area. Now, the problem is, under those circumstances, we have a situation where I think yourself and certainly Calvin Hamilton and others who have been talking about the grouping of multiple dwellings may one day find that the policy as expressed in the '72 report and later reports has become more important. But it may not come, to my mind--if we also look at other policies--nearly as early as people expect. Actually, for example, it's been twenty years since--more than that-- It's been about twenty years since I left SCAG and another ten since this policy was expressed, and we still have--

Murdoch

We still have sprawl.

Holden

We still have sprawl.

Murdoch

In the seventies, SCAG played, I think, a key role in the beginning of air quality planning and water quality planning. Would you say a few words about that?

Holden

Yes. What I want to do, as a logical sequence, is to list some of these plans associated as elements of a general plan and then the activities which motivated additional studies by SCAG subsequently, which we took advantage of in terms of financing.

Murdoch

Yes, yes: please do list them.

Holden

The basic plan included most of the things we were interested in. The most important one, in addition to population, was economic development, which also related back to the land-use plan. SCAG has worked then, and does now, in estimating present and future locations of jobs in some detail, considerable detail, and this too is a basic fundamental of estimating trips.

Murdoch

Well, SCAG developed or perfected the concept of job-housing balance. We must break now to turn the tape over.

## **1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two (October 21, 1998)**

Murdoch

Tell us more about the role of SCAG.

Holden

We were talking about the elements of the initial planning program, and we had come to economic development. The other in-house activity for us was housing

studies. We got on the staff a rather remarkable young lady-- I think her name was Catherine Cousins, if I have the right person. Catherine was able to take an awful lot of existing data and interpret that data in terms of a number of housing questions--including shortages, demands by economic groups, etc., etc., into a comprehensive report by census tract and by city, most importantly. At that same time, the legislature in its wisdom had decided that in spite of a reluctance of the legislature to support public housing generally in the past years, they would now require all cities and counties to prepare a housing element and specify certain information that should be related to that or included in that housing element. The SCAG element, much to my surprise-- because I thought it would be a horrendous job to do this--did have information along these lines which, it turned out, could be used by a number of smaller cities and could satisfy the state requirements. I was eternally grateful for Cousins's activities to have been able to develop such a program for SCAG.

Murdoch

All the local jurisdictions now depend upon SCAG's population and economic projections, even Los Angeles County--that resisted it for years.

Holden

That's true. Okay. Next items were some of the ones which we developed very cursorily at first. We did have an open space element. We were interested in how much open space there might be, and that also interpreted in terms of parks. Transportation was an element-- There was an environmental and natural resources section, and here it was with goals and so forth included. There were a couple of other elements which were rather interesting thrown in here: a justice and safety element, a health element, and an education element. My goodness, what--

Murdoch

An education element! You were ambitious.

Holden

--we were talking about today-- Now, to explain then what happened at SCAG and really what went on to happen, particularly in the regional issues area, we have to go back and we have to recognize that in the seventies--

Murdoch

We're in the mid-seventies now.

Holden

--we finally had gotten to the point where a lot of the infrastructure, which had been worked on now for a number of years after the war, finally needed extra effort, and we came to some major decisions, some of those policies that affect other things. The argument was that the local governments--cities and counties--more and more were being denied revenue sources to do their own work. Where did they look? Who could raise the revenue? The national government.

So we had all kinds of funding for studies passed through to SCAG and local governments in terms of block grants, etc. We had, again, the specific regional activities, beginning with a long-established transportation program, but now they were beginning to get concerned about the environmental--I might as well call it "revolution" in those days. We wanted more money in local areas for water quality study plans and facilities. We wanted more money for waste management. We wanted more money even for parks and open spaces, and there was a program of this kind beginning to be developed at the federal level. And so SCAG took it upon itself to satisfy the then increasing requests for all these programs, for some kind of an overall regional planning agency to be involved in the planning for these areas, to try to broaden the scope of concern for these special-purpose activities. And so what did we get? Over a period of time we got a cursory open space plan, but it did satisfy the need at that particular time for qualifications for federal funds. We got several programs suddenly coming before us in environmental areas, particularly water quality and waste management.

Murdoch

And air quality.

Holden

We will come to air quality. That was one of the last ones, but an important one and which I want to mention specially. We began to have the federal government interested in justice and safety, health, questions of education, and with the same idea that somehow or other there should be some kind of coordinating activity. So SCAG has asked for and gotten money over time for almost all of these programs and almost all of them were financed as a part of this movement at the federal government level. I don't need to, I think, trace all of that except, possibly, comment on a couple of them. One of the more interesting ones is the air pollution that you're talking about. This interest occurred particularly toward the end of my time at SCAG. There was beginning to be federal money available, and we began to explore with the districts and with others a program that SCAG would apply for which would provide some studies and background for air pollution that related to these individual needs within the big cities and counties and so forth-- Begin to bring some coordination. This development of a program was under way here, and all of a sudden the state legislature in its wisdom decided to create a new regional air quality district. It used a method of organization that was almost identical to SCAG, but is now special purpose for air pollution. I do recall--perhaps it summarizes what happened here--Frank Hotchkiss came running into the office one day and he said-- This was just after I had left. We'd already gotten our air pollution program approved. It was just about to begin and so forth, but I was down there. Frank comes around. He came rushing over and he said, "Do you

know what, Ed? The state government has finally created a real regional planning agency. You know they gave that air pollution control district [South Coast Air Quality Management District] more responsibility for controlling all kinds of development in the Los Angeles region than any other agency that I've ever seen." And, as a matter of fact, they had.

Murdoch

[laughs] Isn't that interesting, that the air quality agency became the land-use agency?

Holden

Well, yes and no. The actual implementation of this ran afoul of some other things. It's not too hard for the area in air pollution to have a solution which is a technical solution as long as it doesn't cost too much, and it's a preferred solution, a technical solution--in the cars reducing emissions, etc. The action that we were talking about here though is: We can't do it all with techniques of that kind. So what are we going to talk about? What are we going to do? Are we going to have special zones, carpool zones? We could go so far as to build special zones, special roadways on the freeways to do this. We're going to--

Murdoch

High occupancy vehicle.

Holden

We're going to encourage rapid transit. We're going to encourage all kinds of use of electricity. We're going to try to again come up with the idea of more condensed population. All of these things. Every one of them had some attack on the normal habits of people in this region at this time. Right. Okay. The net result is that a number of these activities have been explored. There had been a rather great use, it seems to me, which I read in the papers and so on, that the air pollution control district has tried and looked into an awful lot of proposals. Carpooling, etc., was a great activity of SCAG for a while, working with large industries. The latest reports are that maybe it's not quite doing the job that people would like to have it do. I kind of hate to see an almost vacant carpool lane when everybody else is one person to a car out in all the other lanes, and you have an empty carpool lane, which you sometimes do see these days.

Murdoch

Well, the air quality district does seem to be under political attack at this time.

Holden

Yes, it does, and again it's saying "Can't we do it with technique and not with change to the habit patterns of the whole community?"

Murdoch

Can I--? I'd like to go back for just a moment. During this very key period when you developed the first development guide which really looked ahead and



solved all these problems, Jack Green and [Norton] Younglove were key board members. Do you have anything to say about them?

Holden

Jack was a very supportive one and certainly Norton Younglove. He was interested in SCAG when he was councilman for the city of Riverside and subsequently when he moved over to be a supervisor in the county of Riverside. But to mention a number more-- Some of the founding fathers should get a mention here in this. I'd like to mention some of the early people and also some of those that became presidents of SCAG in addition to Dan Mikesell and Tom Bradley. The first president of SCAG was, in 1966, Dallas [M.] Williams. He was a councilman in Burbank. In 1967, David L. Baker, who was an Orange County supervisor-- They have all been important on various SCAG committees. Jack Green was president in 1972. John [T.] Conlon from Ventura County was president in 1971. In 1970, Ned Chatfield, a representative from the city of Camarillo, was a president. They've all been pretty helpful. We've already mentioned Mikesell, as I said. You also mentioned Norton Younglove; [he] subsequently has been a president of SCAG. A number of other people-- From time to time there have been great supporters of SCAG, so that Ray Remy and--after his leaving, shortly after I retired from SCAG--Mark Pisano have had quite a bit of support from these people--

Murdoch

Tell us a little bit about the transition from Ray Remy to Mark Pisano and their contrast in styles, if there was one.

Holden

Well, what happened at that particular point is that I decided that it was a good time for me to go on to other things. We had by then at SCAG started some kind of program on almost every one of these major regional issues. They were all ready to go. They were ready to hire. There was money appropriated and so on. So I decided to retire from SCAG at that time.

Murdoch

What year was that?

Holden

Nineteen seventy-seven. As a matter of fact, in April, I guess. At that time, Ray-- At the beginning of my--

Murdoch

That was around the time that Ray Remy went to work for Mayor Bradley, right?

Holden

My first decision along that line-- He was still at SCAG, and there was no rumor that he was going to quit. But all of a sudden one day, just about the time

I was leaving there--I'd made that decision--he came in and said, "Well, I'm going to go to work for Mayor Bradley as his--"

Murdoch

Chief deputy.

Holden

--chief deputy." Yes. SCAG started looking for somebody else. Mark was an employee of Washington in the--

Murdoch

Water quality, I think, arena.

Holden

I think he was in the rapid transit or public transit division of the Department of Transportation. He had knowledge and was working with the distribution of funds for subways and rapid transit of different kinds. Mark agreed to come, I think, because he felt that he could do some good in the area in terms of allocating and working with these various distributions of funds. He's also an economist and not a planner, not in a disparaging sense, because he had a lot of planning ideas, but he's very much a transportation-planning guy in the first instance and that, of course, is our bread and butter, obviously. So he came to work for SCAG. He's been very much an advocate of SCAG. He was also married to a very lovely lady who must be a genius, getting herself involved in the community and very able in terms of networking with a good many people, including business people in the community. With her help--by the way she's a dean at USC [University of Southern California] new school these days-- This is Mrs. [Jane G.] Pisano. What's her first name? I've forgotten. Anyway, so Mark began to develop support through those interesting contacts and his own efforts and Washington associations. He had a lot of points of view in this area. It is not, therefore, surprising that SCAG, I'm sure, was involved to a substantial extent when the Business Roundtable in Los Angeles as reported in the [Los Angeles] Times recently, comes out with the idea that we'd better take another look at the infrastructure in this area. Are we really developing it enough? Do we need more attention and more money devoted to this purpose? I think we should. Anyway, Mark carries on, and I think he's carried on in a number of different ways, using his economic background and his transportation background-- I think he's going in a good direction for the area.

Murdoch

How would you contrast Mark Pisano's style with Ray Remy's style?

Holden

I have never had a chance to be intimately associated or closely associated--not to mention intimately--with Mark in terms of his direct relationships with the SCAG executive committee or something of that kind. I do know him because he'd been helpful to us in subsequent programs, which we'd all been interested

in, namely planning the history program [Los Angeles Regional Planning History Group], which we'll get to in a minute. I think we should carry on here, though, at this point--

Murdoch

But let me--

Holden

So far as I know, Mark is doing fine. I don't think he had quite the clout or quite the organization building skills that Ray Remy had, but I don't discount him for many of the good things that I think he's done and, of course, keeping the whole outfit together. I do want to--

Murdoch

As you look back on your years with SCAG and have followed SCAG since, do you have any thoughts on why it has been so difficult to build support for some kind of regional organization when, to me, it seems so dramatically necessary? We're just not facing up to our problems, and yet there just doesn't seem to be-- It seems very difficult to build political support for a true regional approach.

Holden

All right. I have a couple of thoughts on that-- well, on SCAG and why it's going to be around for a while. These relate to certain political policies, if you like--going back to that kind of a discussion--that existed in this region. First of all, SCAG was formed partly as a defense mechanism to get cities and counties in the game, so to speak, in terms of their own interests for development in this region.

Murdoch

Well, they wanted regional self-rule rather than having the state of California or the U.S. federal government making decisions.

Holden

It still remains true that a lot of people now are turning to the county situation, and still believe that the three major multipurpose governments are state, county, and city. Unless a major change occurs, it is likely to me that this penchant on the part of the state legislature is going to continue, and we'll get more rather than fewer single-purpose approaches to solving regional problems. I don't see a lot of interest on the part of support groups at the moment for something other than that approach. I think it must be that the legislature is getting feedback from local people, that that's the way to go. This leaves a question. All right. It might be nice if we could figure out how to reorganize the whole system here and put the number of regional functional activities together as a single function and provide an elected group for that agency which would have the authority to match and look at and control these several regional agencies. I think it's going to be a long time before we see it. It might be nice if

there is ultimately enough effort and discussion on this--or some kind of an emergency that says it's necessary. We're not likely to get it.

Murdoch

What you're saying is, things have to get bad before they get better, and I think you're right.

Holden

It may be. At the same time, there are many technical needs and many coordination functions that need to be solved at a regional level. Therefore--

Murdoch

And they're not being solved.

Holden

--the only agency currently that we have around that can do this kind of thing is SCAG.

Murdoch

Right.

Holden

It may or may not be very strong. It may or may not be able to fight an entrenched director of one of the major special districts in L.A. County [laughs], but it's the only area currently where there is real discussion. SCAG is organized to do something about these problems. Boy, some of the discussions on some of the committees of SCAG, which involved honest people, were amazing, and they were not all exactly in line on how these things should go. So hopefully SCAG is still going to be around. It's still active at this moment with some-- As long as the federal government will finance it, fine. It would be nice to find some additional kind of financing--maybe through the state, a recognized law or something of the sort where SCAG would have enough money to do its job. It would be in order. Meantime, SCAG will sometimes have lots of activity. Sometimes it will have relatively little, but it will survive.

Murdoch

Let's move on. Tell us a little bit about your consulting activities and particularly the organization of the regional planning history group.

Holden

After my retirement in 1977, I did take on a few little consulting jobs, some of which were quite interesting. We might mention the fact that I did do a general plan on zoning ordinances for the city of Blythe out in the desert. It gave me a chance to run around the countryside and see some of the region that I didn't see too often before, and it was a lot of fun. I had a job with QUAD Consulting Group; two contracts I did for them. One was a review of one of the electric utility lines, the new line proposed by the [Los Angeles City] Department of Water and Power, where QUAD was a consultant in terms of the appearance of these lines in a report which would relate to an environmental impact statement

which QUAD was creating. I also worked with that group in terms of creating an environmental impact statement with respect to a redevelopment project in Bakersfield. There were a number of these things. They were relatively small or limited, but a lot of fun to do. Actually, as time went by, my efforts in that line became somewhat more limited, though there were a number of things that carried over a period of time and it was a fun activity. Moving on.

Murdoch

Tell us about organizing the regional planning history group.

Holden

Yes. One of my first loves, of course, has always been what happened, what is happening, what will happen to the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission. George [L.] Marr was a member of the Regional Planning Commission staff for a long, long time. Some time ago, perhaps maybe fifteen years ago now, George discovered some very important maps from a late 1930s study of the complete coastal basin of Los Angeles County in terms of a detailed land-use survey and the mapping of that land use. It was created, I think, as a WPA [Works Progress Administration] project, using federal funding. That became the basis for important theoretical work by commission staff people. There was an important name, but I can't remember it right at the moment. Anyway, these maps were on file-- I'm not quite sure whether George found them on file with the county or with the Regional Planning Commission or with the county engineer. But in any event, the county was going through a "let's clean out the papers" effort. George started to look for someplace he could take those maps and preserve them. He went to, among other things, the Huntington Library [Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens]. There was a curator there for rare books by the name of Allan Jutzi-- And Jutzi, who was very interested in Southern California and Los Angeles history, took them in. But that inspired, mostly at the behest of Cal Hamilton, the idea that there ought to be an organization that looked after the collection of old planning data as one of its objectives; as a second objective, educating this area in what kind of planning history really had existed; a third part, perhaps to develop oral histories of important people in the region, particularly that related to the development of the county. Allan Jutzi, of course, was primarily interested in this history of the development of this region. That's his main concern here. The net result is that I became interested in this particular activity, and with Allan, he and I formed and--with an attorney of his acquaintance--created a non-profit California corporation with the title Los Angeles Regional Planning History Group.

Murdoch

And what year was that in?

Holden

That was--the year for that-- I have it right here in one of these papers. The Los Angeles Regional Planning History Group received its papers of incorporation on January 11, 1984. I've served a number of years as president of this group. We have accomplished a number of things. There is a sizable library now at the Huntington, a collection of papers that do reflect a lot of the planning history of the Los Angeles region. There are three existing oral histories, and the program continues. The oral histories are of William J. Fox, who was an early director of the Regional Planning Commission, and subsequently county engineer; Milton Breivogel, who worked for both city and county, and for many years as director of planning for the RPC; and Simon Eisner, who at a very early date, even before the 701 program was officially adopted, decided that he would quit work for the city or the county and go out as a professional planning consultant. His first job was a general plan, I think, for the city of San Bernardino. In any event--

Murdoch

And Cal Hamilton?

Holden

And Cal Hamilton. There were four, weren't there? That's right--director of planning for the city of Los Angeles.

Murdoch

Also, you have some videotapes, do you not?

Holden

Oh, yes. We have--

Murdoch

You have videotapes of a very interesting presentation by Milt Breivogel.

Holden

Yes, we do have a couple. We have some transcriptions of seminars we have had on various aspects of planning. We expect this work to continue, obviously, over a period of time. I find I am now a part of this oral history program, where I'll have completed one of these oral history sessions. These are done, by the way, by LARPHG [the Los Angeles Regional Planning History Group], but with the complete cooperation and help of the UCLA Oral History Program. I am grateful for the chance to do it. It's a very interesting process to express one's historical viewpoint--

Murdoch

Well, as we start to sum up here in a little bit, tell us what you think might be helpful to a young person, young planner, who wanted to be active in encouraging a better land-use pattern and a better environment? What advice would you have for a young planner?

Holden

Get into the field and get your education, preferably, at least, at the graduate level, and in a professional planning program. Beyond that, the situation is that a lot of these old-time activities, ones that I was involved in, for example, essentially the initial zoning refinement for large areas of Los Angeles County-- That kind of thing doesn't exist as much anymore. Many young planners these days find that they're going into things other than official government planning and the official planning agency. The AICP [American Institute of Certified Planners], the professional planners' organization, now has several thousand members compared to the relatively few--less than four hundred--that the AICP actually had way back when I started in planning. Well, where are all these people employed, anyway? Well, they're employed in a lot of activities, and as planners they have abilities and knowledge which is useful to many different people. You could even go beyond the physical planning groups, such as engineers and architects and landscape architects, into fields such as administration work, corporate planning even. I do find that planning education now tends to be consolidated, which may be a good thing. It expands the scope of a planner. An example of that is the fact that, not in my time but shortly after, the sort of combined subsections of planning were combined into a planning school--a school of urban planning and development. Today, just recently completed, we have a reassertion of the same idea. We have now a larger school, which is a school of policy, planning, and development recently established at USC [University of Southern California School of Planning, Policy, and Development]. It has the standard city planning component, but it also has a particularly real-estate-oriented activity and it also is combined with an old planning administration section, so that there can be an interchange of--

Murdoch

I think you're right. I think it's a very exciting development down at USC. They involve policy planning, and Tridib Banerjee is a key actor in it. I think that USC will have a very strong planning school.

Holden

Yes, and it's worth mentioning and encouraging. Well, nowadays, we don't see so many people being taken into the profession with only a B.A. degree, but with occasionally a specific degree in planning, such as in the polytechnic schools or in the graduate courses that we find in various places. So it's going to be harder to get into the field unless you have a very good education.

Murdoch

Well, in the planning techniques, it's so advanced now. I'm thinking of computers and geographic information systems that young planners today can do in days what would take us months or years in the old days.

Holden

That's exactly right.

Murdoch

The problem still seems to be that we don't seem to have developed a political will to face up to our problems and plan ahead. I think, perhaps, politicians--even if they provide lip service to long-range planning--they're concentrating on the next election, which is relatively short-term.

Holden

Very often.

Murdoch

I think maybe-- Remember, there was that concept that was developed at your USC school--of continuous city planning. You break away from the twenty-year comprehensive plan and have a continuous plan. You have a two-year plan and a five-year plan and a ten-year plan.

Holden

May I add--?

Murdoch

Do you have any reactions to that or anything else in terms of what direction you think planning is going?

Holden

I would suggest an additional axiom that supports to an extent what they're thinking about, and that is that any area which, because of many factors, is subject to rapid change must have more and more continuous planning, because you have to change that plan on occasion when you have these influences coming in often from the outside. You have to take into account trends, trends that you may want to modify.

Murdoch

I think you also have to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

Holden

It's also true that change is going to come relatively gradually in the larger sense, just as it may take a considerable amount of time for us finally to think about housing people in high-rise buildings here in this area-- The real question is whether it's desirable, such as they do in, say, the plan they have in Beijing, China.

Murdoch

Well, we've enjoyed very much hearing about those really key days when the county of Los Angeles completed for the first time a county-wide plan and zoning ordinance and hearing about those founding days of SCAG, when SCAG regional planning first got rolling. Do you have any other final concluding remarks that you would like to make?

Holden



Before we go into a final statement, I would like to add remarks about a couple of people. The first is Mr. Joseph [K.] Kennedy, who helped me and worked with me in the planning of Blythe. He also worked with me for many years at the county and is currently involved in many interesting programs in the south Whittier area. That reminds me that we have not and should mention the early activity of the Regional Planning Commission in providing planners to many cities around the area, not only in terms of programs, but also as employees of cities. They're graduates of an effective education process that went on at the RPC [Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission] We should honor that because there were a lot of people in this area who did graduate from that L.A. County system. Finally, one last statement, something like this: We began this tape with my mentioning that I was born on an orange ranch in San Dimas, that my own interest was going actually into some other profession than agriculture. Then we can go to 1947. In 1947 I married [Miriam] Louise Bader, and seven days later I went to work for the Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission. In the course of time we had three children--Katherine Louise, Mary Jane, and Robert Edward Holden. We have five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. In 1977, I decided to retire. I worked on a lot of projects, but now, gradually, they have become volunteer [projects] or hobbies. In 1997, now fifty years later, Lou and I celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary. Today we live in a comfortable suburban home on a hill here in Whittier, California. Our house overlooks the Los Angeles plain. On clear days--and by the way we have more clear days than when we first moved into this house--we can see [Santa] Catalina [Island].

Murdoch

Thanks to your good air quality efforts.

Holden

We are now, at this location, about thirty miles from where I was born. The orange groves are gone. Finally, we are today well within the boundary of the metropolitan area of this region, the second largest metropolitan region in the United States, in a world-class area.

Murdoch

Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Holden.

Holden

What a life!

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