A TEI Project

Interview of Stephen R. Reinhardt

Table of contents

1. Transcript (July 2, 2013)

PARKER
This is Caitlin Parker. I'm here with Judge Stephen Reinhardt. It is July 2, 2013. So let's begin with when and where were you born.

[Note: The recording quality of this interview is very poor. Every effort was made to provide an accurate transcript, but where that was not possible, [unclear] is indicated.]

REINHARDT
New York City, 1931.
PARKER
Okay. And then when did you move to L.A.?
REINHARDT
Well, I actually went—well, it was really in the last year of high school, and then went to college here.
PARKER
Could you talk a little bit about your family?
REINHARDT
Well, it was my stepfather who lived here, but he was in the army during [unclear]. He was in New York, and [unclear] Astoria, Long Island, where they made movies. It was the Signal Corps. They made all kinds of movies for the air force, for the army. So after the war, why, he moved back to Hollywood with my mother, and I stayed in school in New York until my senior year in high school. And then I went to Pomona after that. So it was just at the end of the Second World War.
PARKER
Okay. And then did you move to Los Angeles after your time at Pomona?
REINHARDT

No. Then I went back to law school at Yale.
PARKER
Okay.
REINHARDT
And then after that I had to go into the air force for two years, but that was in the Pentagon. I was there in the secretary of the air force's office. And then I was a law clerk in Washington for a year, and when that ended, I came out here. My parents were living at the beach in Santa Monica. [telephone interruption]
REINHARDT
— the air force, just for a visit, because I didn't really think about practicing law out here, but it was so beautiful out on the beach. And then my father wanted me to see a lawyer out here who was the leading lawyer in the entertainment field, and I went to him and I talked to him for an hour, and though it was a leading firm, they only had eight people, and he said, "We only hire when someone leaves or we get a big new client, but I want you to go see two other firms." And I said, "I don't want to go see any other firms. I just agreed to see you." But he picked up the phone and he called the two largest firms in town, Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, and O'Melveny and Myers. They were the really major firms in Los Angeles, and I went to see the first one. It was the day of Little Rock when the president sent in the troops to escort the young black children into the school. And I said to them at lunch, "Wasn't it a wonderful thing what the president did?" And they sort of looked at me. And we got back from lunch and I said to them, "Before we talk any more, I think I ought to tell you that I'm Jewish." And they said, "Oh, we don't care about that. O'Melveny hires women. Of course, we don't, but we hire Jews and they don't," which was all untrue. They didn't hire Jews and they didn't hire women. Oh, I know what I was saying. The end of that they said, "We hire them, but we wouldn't really be comfortable having to listen to your liberal ideas at lunchtime."
So I said, "Thanks," and went to the other one. And it was as if I was a gift from heaven. I couldn't understand why there were so eager to hire me. I found out about five or ten years later that the lawyer who had sent me there was the head of the Anti-Defamation League, and they had been threatening to take all the movie business away from O'Melveny if they didn't hire some Jews. So

that's how I ended up out here, because they were so eager to hire me. I went back to New York for a day. It was hot. Had to ride the subway. So I called them back and I said, "Well, I think I'll stay here."

PARKER

O'Melveny and Myers is also kind of on the conservative end of the political spectrum as well.

REINHARDT

Oh, very. They were no Democrats, no Jews, no women. I was just saying how there were no women at O'Melveny.

PARKER

So what kind of law were you practicing at O'Melveny and Myers?

REINHARDT

I was only there two years. I was doing entertainment law, though.

PARKER

And then you switched to labor law?

REINHARDT

Yes.

PARKER

What pushed that, motivated that change?

REINHARDT

I didn't like being at O'Melveny very much. It was not only very conservative, it was not enlightened it any way, and they were all Republicans.

PARKER

What do you mean, not enlightened?

REINHARDT

Well, it was not the kind of atmosphere a liberal person would enjoy. Most of the people who were hired the same time as I was were assigned to a project of writing an opinion of how to—

[interruption]

REINHARDT

Most of the group of about five of us were hired at the same time. About four of them were assigned to the project of how you can keep blacks out of the Turf Club at Santa Anita. I was luck; I got to go see the head of the litigation department, who was commander of the yacht club at Newport, and he wanted me to see if the equal protection clause prohibited the government from taxing yacht clubs the mooring fees because it was a private club and they didn't tax

public golf clubs for their green fees. And I went and I spent two hours in the library, and I said, "That's really an interesting project, Mr. Mitchell." About two, I came back and I said, "There are two Supreme Court cases on this that say you can tax private golf clubs even if the public golf clubs aren't taxed." And he said, "What were those cases?" When I told him the names. He said, "Are those Jewish golf clubs?" I said, "Mr. Mitchell, it didn't say anything in the Supreme Court decision about their being Jewish golf clubs." He said, "Oh, those Supreme Court justices know about that, though." So that's what I mean by not being quite the right atmosphere that you'd like to spend your time in.

PARKER

And then what kind of labor law were you doing when you switched over?

REINHARDT

I was representing unions and I was in a whole variety, a lot of the railroad unions, the firefighter unions, maritime unions, culinary workers, horseshoe unions, little ones like that. I'm trying to think of a little one that the newspapers—we represented all the newspaper unions. Paperhandlers union was one. A wide variety of unions. I mean, our firm did; I didn't by myself. So that was more interesting because you were involved in strikes and then arbitrations. Ended up with one of the major strikes with O'Melveny on the other side. That was the Herald Examiner, which was before your time.

PARKER

Uh-huh, yeah, I remember. What was the state of labor organizing like at that point? Because I imagine it was after the kind of anti-communism, and L.A. was sort of notorious for being open shop.

REINHARDT

That was more the movie industry. There was the Hollywood Ten, but I wasn't involved in that. We didn't have any disputes, and the unions weren't all that liberal in those days. By the time I started practicing labor law, it was about 1960, and that was really after the McCarthy days. So then I became involved in politics. My brother-in-law was an assemblyman in the district that Tom Bradley was the city councilman.

PARKER

Oh, okay. What was his name?

REINHARDT
Charlie Warren, and he lives up in Sacramento now. He became chairman of the Democratic Party. So he was one of, I think, two named sponsors of Tom's campaign for mayor. I then became—first I was the counsel for the party, and then I had some position. I can't remember, but I guess it was before then. Yeah, it was before I became the national committeeman.
PARKER
This is for the DNC?
REINHARDT
Yeah, but at that point we only had one male and one female. I was involved in the Bobby Kennedy campaign and became the national committeeman and I organized all the party officials to support Tom when he ran for mayor against Yorty, who was a nightmare. The national committeewoman, who was a rather rich lady, was a strong Yorty supporter, and she was the only one who was for Yorty, and I got all the other party officials to support Tom. I became a very close friend of his two other main supporters, who was Maury Weiner and Sam Williams. So Maury and Sam and I sort of did all the campaign work for Tom, and we lost the election.
PARKER
In '69, yeah.
REINHARDT
Yes.
PARKER
I wonder if we can back up a tiny bit, and I was just curious if you could talk a little bit about the period when Tom Bradley was a councilman. Were you involved in the kind of like local Democratic clubs as well or things like that, or what was your—
REINHARDT
Yes, but not across town. Far away from that. I didn't get involved until he decided to run against Yorty. That first primary in '69, the most interesting thing to me, thing that happened was we talked about how election night of the primary we would try to show that it was not a black-versus-white campaign. So we tried to get a mixed group of people on the stage with Tom. I think Willie was his name, he was somebody like that with half his motorcycle group, they were stationed at the bottom of the platform to try to keep all the blacks from rushing up. And then we decided I was going to stand

on one side of Tom and Adele the woman who was head of the state Women's Division of the party was on the other side of him, and then we had his family around us. I think it was just Ethel and the two daughters. And we had these motorcycle people down on the stairs to keep the public from coming up.
So we were successful for a little while, but not very long, because he was surrounded by a horde of blacks who—but what happened is the Yorty people got a picture of us and they blackened my face and Adele's, they sent out a citywide postcard of the election night, the primary, and there I was in blackface. There are a lot of things like that. I mean, the day that Tom went down to City Hall to take over—what's her name, now? Wanda.
PARKER
Wanda Moore?
REINHARDT
Yes, Wanda walked into her office and there on the desk was a note that said, "Welcome, Topsy." There was no black in the City Hall at all until that day. So I went with Tom that night in 1969. I think I was the only one. I remember where we were. At Columbia Studios waiting for the returns, and I can't remember the name of the guy who was head of Columbia. We were right across the street from the Palladium. I went with Tom into this place he was supposed to wait up at Columbia Studios. He lay down on the couch and he said, "Let me know how things are going." And every report, as it went on, I said it's not looking so good. He'd go back to sleep. And finally I said to him, "You know, it's not going to change." So we went over to the Palladium, where he made a terrific speech, and then went back to his house. Next morning he woke up, just went down to City Hall as if it were an ordinary day. Another thing I remember about that evening was we were in a car, the two of us, on the way—first we went to a dinner at somebody's house I didn't particularly like, stopped by and then went over to the Columbia Studios, where we were to wait for the returns. I was in a car and there was a reporter from the Times there. And we stopped—I can't remember—Tom stopped to go into a store, I think, to take his laundry. But while we stopped and waited for him to come out again, the guy from the Times said to me, "How do you spell your name?" And I told him. He said, "You know why I want your name, don't you?"

I said, "No." He said, "In case you get shot tonight." So I said, "Thanks."

PARKER

So what had your role been in that, that first campaign as an advisor [unclear]?

REINHARDT

Well, Sam Williams, Maury Weiner, and I used to meet regularly and decide what should happen or what Tom should be doing, what kinds of statements he should make, how, who should do what. There was a lot of tension about what he should do that would counter being black, how much of a black campaign it should be, how much of a white. But really, Sam and Maury were—I mean, I was newer, but Sam was one of his old friends and Sam was one of the smartest people I ever knew, and Maury had been with Tom always. But the three of us met regularly at the headquarters. There was a problem of the Left too. People were concerned that Maury was very Left, and he hired somebody named Don Rothenberg, who was in charge of the field operation. I guess it was the Herald where they were running a smear against Don, who I hardly knew, and the question was whether Don should be fired before they came out with this. And we left it up to Sam, who disappeared. Sam occasionally would be unavailable, usually because he'd met a girl. So everyone was waiting for Sam. He was gone for about three days, and then the story came out.

But it was the most interesting campaign because it was financed by a rich real estate developer named Mark Boyer, and Mark just said he'd write checks for whatever we needed. And then we decided to run a picture of Tom in his policeman's uniform. He looked terrific, I mean really wonderful, and Mark said he wouldn't give us money if we ran that picture. He wouldn't give us any more money. I never understood why. He just didn't like the idea of Tom being in a—I mean, he was a conservative real estate person, but somehow he didn't like the idea of Tom in a uniform. We took an ad in the paper. That's how he found out. Then said, "I won't give you any more money if you run that ad again." So we never did. And everybody was sure that Maury did it and it was because they thought he was a left-winger who didn't like the police, but it caused a lot of trouble.

PARKER

Why did Mark Boyer support Bradley?
REINHARDT
Who knows why people with money support candidates. I have no idea.
PARKER
Yeah, that's interesting. I was curious what—you were talking about the conversations of how Bradley should position himself as an African American running for mayor, and what was your advice on that?
REINHARDT
Well, I didn't think it was really possible to hide the fact that he was an African American.
PARKER
Right.
REINHARDT
But none of the billboards had his picture on it, and he got through the primary, ran first in the primary, which nobody expected. So I think we weren't too anxious to promote the fact. But Yorty took care of that.
PARKER
Right.
REINHARDT
But part of it was how much you can count on the black vote and how much time you should spend getting the black vote out and how much time you should spend concentrating on the white vote. I was in favor of concentrating on the white vote. I didn't think he would need too much if he were the first black to ever run for something, and I assumed that we would get all of the black vote. But Sam, who was much more familiar with black politics, thought we should spend a fair amount of the money on hiring black preachers who would then go out and convert their flock. They called it walking-around money. He used to distribute to the people who would get the vote out. I didn't think we needed to do that, but I may have been wrong.
PARKER
What about other minority groups, like Mexican Americans?
REINHARDT
Well, Maury had the theory that we couldn't lose the election because you combined all the minorities, and when you combine

them all—he had the figures—he thought we were sure to win. I didn't know at that point how the other minorities would vote, but I have certainly learned since then that you don't get an automatic brown vote because you're black. You may, in fact, do better if you're white. But it was certainly interesting, the weekend before the election, I had a big fight with the people in the press department because both Meet the Press, and I guess the other one was Face the Nation at that point, they both called to get Tom on the program the Sunday after the election. The fight was over which station he should go on, and I walked in there and I listened to these people. I said, "What's the matter with you? We've got an election ahead, and you're already arguing about what to do after we win the election. You know, we may not even win."
"Oh, no," they all said, "of course we're going to win. We've got to decide which program to go on." Everyone was so confident, everyone except me, because I'm never confident. But everyone thought he was going to win, including Tom. But, I mean, the polls were terrific. And the same thing in the governorship, the gubernatorial election, he was so sure a couple of days before and he couldn't get him to compromise enough—but that wasn't the only—I mean, he lost because of gun control and—
PARKER
Right.
REINHARDT
And the three people who did the gun-control campaign were all strong supporters of his. And I begged them not to do this. They said, "This is the time to do it, when we're going to win." I said, "You're not going to win if you do this." And they all insisted it was a matter of principle. But back to the mayoral campaign the more conservative people decided they wanted to run the 1973 campaign because they thought Maury was too Left, and they thought he was the one who didn't make use of the police uniform. He was actually completely in favor of it. So they brought in somebody, another real estate person, he's decent and he's a good political worker. He was John Tunney's campaign manager. So they wanted to keep Maury out and they did. I didn't spend too much time on the campaign either. Nelson really did it.
PARKER
Nelson Rising?

REINHARDT
Yes. But it was funny because it was, I think, only four years later that Maury, who was the Deputy Mayor, called me one night around five in the morning. He said, "I made a terrible mistake. I'm just getting out of jail." He said, "I think I'll need a lawyer."
So I called the best criminal lawyer there was. Maury told me he'd made a mistake by going to one of those adult theaters, where guys hang out. So I got him a lawyer. The next day was the Police Commission meeting, and we had quite a fight about whether we should pre-judge Maury, I was opposed to pre-judging him, although I didn't think he just happened to go to a theater. I was then, I think, vice president of the Police Commission. We ended up with a trial, and Tom—I don't think any other public official would have behaved the way he did—came and testified for Maury and he kept him on as his chief deputy until he got convicted. But he testified. I testified, too—I talked about the meetings we had had with Sam and Fran and Maury, and I said one of the things we had always discussed was how the police were conducting themselves in these theaters, and I said, "We couldn't be sure that Maury was there to inspect the theater, but there was certainly every reason to think he was, because that was one of the things we were looking into." Didn't help. But Tom never for a minute really cared whether it was true or not. He just was going to stand by Maury.
PARKER
Did Maury continue to have a role after he had to step down?
REINHARDT
I think he did have kind of an unofficial role. It was not too long after that that I became a judge. But I think he did consult, certainly with Tom and probably—I'm not too sure he consulted with Sam, but he probably did with some of the people. I wasn't really involved officially either. But he was really an awfully decent person.
PARKER
Going back to the '73 campaign when Bradley won, so you talked a little bit about the, I guess, more conservative voices of his advisors pushing that campaign, and so could you talk a little bit about, you know, what you saw as the differences in the way that they presented Bradley?
REINHARDT

Oh, I think the difference really was that people were used to him. I mean, they got to see what he was like. I mean, it's a little like Antonio the first time. It's kind of a shock. I mean, I certainly never expected Obama to win. But when Tom ran the second time, he wasn't threatening to anybody. I don't think the campaign was that much different. I don't know whether you noticed the campaign for controller this time. Somebody no one had ever heard of won controller. I still don't understand why, particularly because nobody knows who's running for controller or what a controller is.

PARKER

And 5 percent probably vote for that position. [laughs]

REINHARDT

I mean, how do you explain it? Usually it's a person that they heard the most about. By the second time they were used to Tom.

PARKER

Right.

REINHARDT

So I don't think there was any particular reason that Tom lost the first time and won the second, other than he was black. I really was not involved at all in the campaign, although I sort of kept in touch with Sam. Maury was clearly excluded, and Nelson I knew, but they had all their friends. So right after the election, among that small group of more—they were not necessarily conservative. I mean, they were all good Democrats. One of them was a fellow that used to be in the office next to me here. His name was Bill Norris, and Bill is not conservative at all, but he decided he wanted to get the best people in the country to come and to be a cabinet, Tom would hire them for City Hall, and so Tom had a meeting and there were three of them there: Max Palevsky, Bill Norris, and Nelson. And then Maury and I and Sam were there.

They were telling Tom how to be a mayor, how to run it, how he could get some really good people from all across the country to be in his administration that would work in City Hall, and then he could do all the front work. He could go out and make speeches and do all of that. So Sam never said anything, about anything. He was very silent. Maury they were obviously talking about, so he didn't say anything. I was just stunned by this meeting. They were explaining to him how they were going to take care of his being mayor. And then everybody went back, and I'm sure they thought that

everything was all solved. I got back to the office and as soon as I get there, Tom called and he said, "You know, I've been back in my office since you all left, and I've never laughed so hard in my life. Your face was so red, it was really purple. I've never seen you look like that. You didn't really think I was going to listen to them and dump Maury, did you?" I said, "I didn't know what to think. I was so stunned by this." He said, "Don't worry." And then he never would take another dime from Max Palevsky again. The first thing that he wanted to do was raise all the money to pay Max back. And Max wasn't a bad person. He was one of those rich people who thinks he should take over. But he's a decent—I mean, when Maury had to leave the job, Max called him and asked him to—Max had a house in Palm Springs, and he said to Maury, "Come stay here as long as you want." Anyway, it was all very interesting.

PARKER

What did Bradley come in with as—like, what do you think were his priorities once he was elected?

REINHARDT

Well, you know, I've thought frequently about what is it that a mayor can accomplish. What can he do? How different would it be if someone else were mayor? Well, I mean, coming in after Sam Yorty, you can obviously do something. You can integrate a city. You can make people see that there's not just one society and another society. You can help. [unclear] the Music Center, up until about that time there was only rich, wealthy Christians were—Dorothy Chandler, actually, she helped break it up with only social people. Then after that, when the city started to become a more integrated city, different, the Pasadena society and the rest, I mean, he was a large part of that. I went to City Hall before then for not really political things, but for some legal things, and it was just a pure white city, a pure white government, a pure white social world. And he did change that. I don't know whether that's what he wanted to do, but it's what he did. He didn't say much of that except at the inauguration we went over to the Music Hall after the ceremony [unclear] the Music Center, and I don't know what we were doing there. I don't remember, but there was a big crowd downstairs. And he's walking up the stairs. I don't know who he was addressing, but he looked down at the crowd and had this huge grin on his face, and he said, "I is da mayor," he said. That was never

out of his mind. But I think he wanted to—in the campaign, one of the things he said he was going to do was try to limit the population, which was a nutty idea, but he didn't want it to get out of control, too many people. But he talked about the transportation system. I think he wanted to turn it into a real city.

PARKER

And then downtown?

REINHARDT

Yes, well, you couldn't—downtown. I just think he wanted to make it a major metropolitan area. It was a little bit of a sort of—I can't think of the word of what it was. It wasn't really a cosmopolitan area. It was just sort of—it wasn't a major city. It wasn't all connected, which it still isn't. But I think he wanted—I mean, I think the tallest building was about eight stories. He really wanted to make it a major city, and you can't really do that without a downtown.

PARKER

Uh-huh. What kind of relationships did he then have with some of the people who were sort of the traditional downtown powerbrokers?

REINHARDT

I think he got on with them fairly well. He was not any kind of radical by any means. He was fairly moderate, and I think he understood you have to work with those people. I don't think he probably enjoyed being with them very much.

PARKER

What was moderate about him or about his politics?

REINHARDT

Well, if you listen to his speeches, he didn't rant or rave or say power to the people or any of those things. He just governed the way a moderate person would do. I never heard him talk about the kinds of Black Power things or even any of the left-wing causes. He would be on the side of—I can't think of anything he ever did to sort of—a move that we would ever say he was a left-winger. He was—

PARKER

Right. Because if you think about, yeah, it's like busing, for example, at that time. He was—

REINHARDT

Yes, he was moderate.

PARKER
He was supportive of it, but he didn't take a—I mean, it wasn't under his control, but he didn't take a strong stand.
REINHARDT
No.
PARKER
And also, yeah, I mean fiscally, too, he even emphasized that he was sort of a fiscal conservative when it came to governing the city. Did you have a sense of that?
REINHARDT
Well, I think where his heart was, was with the people who needed help. I mean, if you think—I'm trying to think of left-wingers. He never said or did anything that would—I'm trying to think of who left-wingers are these days. There aren't many.
PARKER
No.
REINHARDT
I'd say he was middle of the road.
PARKER
Yeah, I was just curious if it was your sense that that was kind of his political sensibility or if it was because he had to be that way because of political pressures.
REINHARDT
I think he basically was that way. Anyone who was a cop is certainly—
PARKER
Right.
REINHARDT
Although he did not much care for Ed Davis or Daryl Gates. It was not a particularly great time to grow up in the city as black or particularly in the police department. And they said [unclear].
PARKER
And he'd reached the ceiling of how far they were going to let him go.
REINHARDT
In the department, yes.
PARKER

Yeah. So could you talk a little bit about that? What was your role on the Police Commission, or what kind of—I guess vis-à-vis the government and then the police department?

REINHARDT

Well, the police chief in those days really was the most important person in the city. Nobody wanted to take on the police chief because the police, both the chief and the union, their endorsement meant more than anybody else's, and if they said you weren't pro law enforcement, it would be very hard to get elected.

One of the things when I first came in here, some people called CROs, who were Community Relations Officers, and the department had used all those people to influence community people from a conservative standpoint, and everyone was afraid of the CROs. We abolished them at some point shortly after that. I don't remember how we did it, really, but I know that we got rid of the CROs. But he stayed away from dealing with the police department, really, and he never tried to influence the members of the Police Commission. He'd come in—he didn't ever talk to us about the commission or what he wanted us to do. I don't know how he was with other groups. I don't know whether he trusted us or whether he just believed in that generally, that he trusted his commissioners. All I know is that he never, never at any time tried to change our policies—whatever we did was fine.

PARKER

What was the relationship of the commission to the police department?

REINHARDT

Well, not terribly good, but you couldn't compete with the police chief. I mean, he was on television every day. He was a strong, powerful figure. And five civilians who spent one day—not one day. I mean, went down for a meeting one day a week. Nobody knew who any of us was. When the chief got up and said something, you couldn't compete with him. We did accomplish some things. We changed the PDID policies, which were spying on everybody. We changed the shooting policy. So we had some significant effect on the department, but nobody had as much effect on the city as Ed Davis or Daryl. I mean, if the Mayor wanted to get into a real fight with the chief of police, he could compete, but I wouldn't bet on the mayor winning. It's different now. Now certainly Antonio could win a

fight with Charlie Beck. People don't know who Charlie Beck is, but everybody knew who Ed Davis was.

PARKER

Do you think that's a post-Rodney King thing that the chief was discredited or didn't have—

REINHARDT

Well, I think it's more—did you say post-Bradley or post-King?

PARKER

King. Rodney King.

REINHARDT

No, that's a post-King thing. The Christopher Commission, which is a funny story about how it got to be the Christopher Commission. I called Tom after the riots and I said, "You know, this is the time that we could really get something done." He said, "You can't. We've got this charter." And I said, "This is really the time if there's ever going to be a time, but what we really need to do is to get a commission together and with prominent people." And he said, "Well, who do you think would be good to head that commission?" And I said—I can't remember his name now. He was in the cabinet and he was at O'Melveny. He was in Washington. He's very highly regarded and he was black, and he was in the secretary of something under one of the Republicans. I can't remember his name at this moment, but he was perfect to head the commission. He said, "That's a terrific idea. I'll get a hold of him." And I said, "Okay. When are you going to call him?" He said, "Well, I've got to call Warren Christopher first, because Chris is out here and this other guy's in Washington, so I've got to go through Chris and tell him what we're going to do." He called me back in about ten minutes. He said, "You won't believe what happened." I said, "What do you mean, what happened?"

"I called Chris," he said, "to let him know I'm going to call. Chris said, 'I want to be the head of it.'" So he said, "Now we're stuck with Chris." So that's how he became head of the Christopher Commission.

PARKER

And how did that change the outcome, do you think, of the—

REINHARDT

Oh, probably not. They've got a good group of lawyers. Chris was a very, very moderate person who never—

PARKER
And he had been involved in the commission after the Watts Riots, is that right?
REINHARDT
No, this is—
PARKER
You were talking about King?
REINHARDT
Yes, King. He may have been, but a secondary level.
PARKER
Right.
REINHARDT
But he's not the kind who, as many people have found when it came to a legal fight, he's not the kind who's a real fighter. He's very quiet, diplomatic. In fact, it was the only time I knew him to really say, "I want to do this." But I think they did a good job on the Christopher Commission. But the way he would do it would be to get a group of people together, sit back, listen to what they all said, and then come out and say would something—he never had ideas that he fought for. He was somebody at the time who was important in the city, that had been on his side and helped, but not somebody that Tom would think is going to be a real fighter or come up with these sort of startling ideas. But it was the best way. I wish I could remember that guy [unclear]. Coleman was his name. He was secretary, but after he retired from whichever administration it was, he became the—I don't know if he was the head partner at O'Melveny or just head of the Washington office.
PARKER
Switching gears a bit, I wondered if you could talk a little bit about your—and going back—your role on the Olympic organizing committee.
REINHARDT
Well, that was another thing. The Olympics, Southern California Olympics was the most anti-Semitic organization for years. When I married my first wife, her stepfather had been the roommate of a guy named John Jewett Garland, who was the head of the Southern California Olympics—and he told, stepfather-in-law, whatever he was, that if his daughter married me, he would never be able to see her again. And he was the head of the Southern California Olympic

Committee for years, and that was the whole atmosphere of that committee. There was a guy named John Argue, who wasn't such a bad fellow, but came from that whole group and everyone thought he was going to be the head of the committee, and Tom was determined that that's not the kind he wanted. So he picked Paul Ziffren, a Jew. Paul became the chairman, which absolutely stunned all those people who'd been working for years to bring the Olympic to Los Angeles. Paul knew nothing about the Olympics, but he was very prominent and a brilliant lawyer and politicians.

PARKER

What had he done previously?

REINHARDT

He'd been national committeeman, actually, where he became very well known because he fought to keep Lyndon Johnson from being vice president. Paul was having a big feud with the Johnson people, mainly about the oil depletion allowance. Anyway, Pat Brown said that he was going to oust Paul Ziffren, and Stanley Mosk was one of Paul's best friends, and they couldn't figure anybody that would be beat Paul until they got Stanley Mosk to run against him. Paul was one of the original supporters of Tom, but he was very well connected with all the society and social people, Mrs. Chandler and all those people. So the Olympic people weren't in a position to object to Paul, but I'm sure that they still haven't gotten over the fact that he was a Jew.

PARKER

Interesting.

REINHARDT

[unclear] to do with the Olympic Committee. Peter Ueberroth did an excellent job. He pretty much ran everything with his deputy. They weren't interested in members of the committee. They sort of did it. There were two of us on the committee who were not businesspeople. The only controversy I ever remember is when the business leaders voted to give Peter a huge bonus. He didn't get a large salary. I mean, it was reasonable, because the Games made a lot of money, and the people on the committee were almost all big executives. Bill Robertson, was head of the County Federal of Labor, and I were the only two who voted against the huge bonus, but that's about—I don't remember any other controversy we had.

PARKER

Okay. Well, I mean, the big kind of focus of it was that it was the first privately funded, and I think something that you see in at least a lot of Bradley's speeches is that he kind of saw that as a very, very successful public-private partnership—

REINHARDT

Yes.

PARKER

—that he could pursue in kind of other areas of urban policy, and I wonder if you could—like, if you had a sense of that.

REINHARDT

I don't remember anything about that. It was '82, was it?

REINHARDT

Eighty-four.

REINHARDT

Eighty-four. Well, by then I was a judge and not too involved in city affairs, but everyone always talked about city private things or whatever, state private, government private. I don't know [unclear] really did much for anybody. It really was just there. It was just like football, which, as a result, we haven't had a team for how many, fifteen years because we said the city's not going to put any money into it. And that didn't bring us a team. But I don't think there was too much public-private activity after that.

PARKER

What was your sense of how L.A. was changing in kind of the later terms of the Bradley administration in the eighties?

REINHARDT

Well, one major change is [unclear] never had anything to do with it. Before he was here, the city being a mixed city [unclear] now. You find all of these [unclear] little divisions called Koreatown or Thai Town. I mean, there was nothing like that before. Now, I guess, it's a white—well, certainly it's a white minority and I guess you probably have a plurality or majority—I guess it's a plurality [unclear].

PARKER

Yeah, as of '80 it wasn't a white-majority city, as of 1980.

REINHARDT

No, '80 was, wasn't it?

PARKER

I think that was when it switched.

REINHARDT
Hard to believe, because now it's really Hispanic. I didn't think it was Hispanic at all then.
PARKER
Well, it wasn't majority Hispanic. It was just not majority white.
REINHARDT
Oh, yes. Well, it's really quite remarkable how what used to be minorities are now maybe principally majorities, but whites are far less significant now. And I suppose that was part of that change. That was the start of the change.
You know, there were no freeways either. Tom was going to build all these subways or whatever you call them, and that didn't quite work out. But certainly it's a downtown now and it wasn't much of one then. It's hard when things change so gradually to really see the change. This was not a labor city. San Francisco was, and now it's thought to be a very pro-labor city until the last election.
PARKER
You mean for Garcetti?
REINHARDT
Yes.
PARKER
And I guess—so we touched on this a little bit, but going back also, did you then have a kind of advisory role in Bradley's gubernatorial campaigns?
REINHARDT
Well, yes, but like the first one, like the first one, everybody thought he was going to win, including him, and I'm always a pessimist, so they kept showing me the polls. I remember I was a judge at the time and not officially in meetings, but the guy who was doing the poll-taking would come by regularly and we'd discuss the polls, and I would tell him I didn't think that he was going to win, and they would say it's sure. This weekend before the election he came over to the house and he said, "Well, now here's the poll, by ten points. Now what do you say? Will you believe me now?" I said, "No." All the people came out of the woods, down from the hills, and Tom didn't really work terribly hard the last few days. If he had, I think he would have won. But he thought he'd won, which everybody else thought too. We talked about it earlier. I think it was because of the initiative on gun control. There were three of them, I think. It was

Vic Palmieri, Bill Norris, and another good friend of mine, John Phillips, was the third, on gun control. John's about to be ambassador to Italy. These people were liberals, but not very practical.

PARKER

They just didn't see that strategically it was going to hurt them?

REINHARDT

Well, it varied. Some didn't believe it. Some didn't care. Some thought it was a matter of principle. Doesn't much matter what the principle is if you don't win the election.

PARKER

One of the—so I was talking about that speech of yours that I read in the archive, but in it that you were talking about a prior speech that you gave, prior to the Rodney King, about inequality in Los Angeles and kind of saying, you know, we may pride ourselves on diversity, but we're no different than other cities in that the conditions for Watts to occur again are here. And I wondered if you could talk a little bit about that, your sense of inequality in the city and what could or should have been done about it.

REINHARDT

Well, there are two different things. I mean, most of the tensions and the emotional feelings have to do with the police. The economic inequality is true everywhere, but the emotional inequality may lead to more crime, but it doesn't lead to riots or to the hostilities. What led to the hostilities always was the police. The neighborhoods are different than they were. Now there are a number of blacks who can live in wealthier neighborhoods. But it's like education, some blacks can go to good schools, but most blacks can't, and most blacks live in segregated neighborhoods still. It comes from economics. Segregation in the public schools is not terribly different. I mean, some wealthier black children can go to decent schools or better schools, but most of the average black children go to all-black schools and live in all-black neighborhoods, and that's not changed. [unclear] generally, and then he would really delegate most of it to other people. Bill Robertson was sort of the person who was supposed to go get a football team, and I was Bill's lawyer, so I did it with him and so we got the Raiders. But Tom wasn't involved. I mean, he would decide, "Yes, we ought to go get the Raiders. Now,

[unclear], you do it." But he would never be in a negotiation or anything like that.

PARKER

What was Bradley's relationship with labor like?

REINHARDT

Very good, because Bill was head of the AFL-CIO and the County Fed. Tom trusted Bill, so Bill would be on groups that would do things. Bill was 100 percent for Tom, and so he had really good relations with labor.

PARKER

And then that was sort of a period when labor started to change, like you had Justice for Janitors and some of the kind of insurgent labor groups.

REINHARDT

Yes, that was after Bill, I think. Bill was very liberal, but he was not—the labor now, I mean, the head of the labor is Maria Elena Durazo and her husband before her, but Bill was there before the Hispanics really became a major factor, and that was true as far as Tom was concerned. Anything else?

PARKER

Well, I guess I'd just be curious to—like, if you have some sort of—if we could go to kind of more bigger analytic frame, if you just have kind of reflections on, you know, how you saw Bradley as a person and a mayor.

REINHARDT

Well, he liked girls [unclear] as a person. I remember the night—it was never going to happen, but in politics, they say people are going to do things just so they had him on the list for vice president.

PARKER

For Carter.

REINHARDT

Was it Carter? No, I think it was after Carter, somebody who didn't get elected.

PARKER

Oh, okay. Mondale maybe?

REINHARDT

It may have been Mondale, but he was on the list and we all knew he wasn't going to get it. I don't know who they gave it to. But they

knew that it was going to be announced that evening, and they called. Nobody could find Tom so that they could tell him he wasn't going to be vice president. A few of us knew where he was. But I mean, he had an interesting personal life. You'd sort of look at him and he's so placid-looking, but he was lively.

PARKER

And I've heard had a great sense of humor.

REINHARDT

Well, maybe. [laughs] His wife was a little odd. [unclear] she used to go on the road with the Dodgers and Tom wasn't interested in any of that. So I mean, he seemed sort of [unclear], but I don't know, really. He had a whole different life with all of his old friends from college and his fraternity and that whole group. I knew who Bill Elkins was, but I didn't know any of those people. That must have been a whole different world that I saw.

PARKER

What about as a mayor, kind of thinking about, you know, kind of the things he had control—to the extent that you have power as a mayor.

REINHARDT

I don't know. I often wonder what difference it makes who's the mayor and how much can he really do and is it really different. I mean, I don't know. Antonio, he certainly a totally different personality than Tom, but did it change more or less while they were in office than it would have if the other one had been there? I mean, Tom made a tremendous difference in the city because he was an historic figure. He changed the whole personality of the city because of the social changes that were occurring in the country, but otherwise I'm not sure how much you can do as mayor or even governor.

PARKER

Especially because he had sort of the advantage of at least federal—he brought in a lot of federal money to the city in the seventies, and then after Proposition 13 and Reagan and—

REINHARDT

Well, he had very good relations with Carter.

PARKER

Yeah.

REINHARDT

And he did a good job. Carter gave the city whatever we needed that he could do. So that was helpful. But he was very positive. You said he had a good sense of humor, but he was not the kind of person that you'd want to go out and have a good time with. Maybe he was with his old fraternity friends, but I mean, even Sam, who was really his closest political friend, Sam also liked girls a great deal. But I can't imagine Sam going out with Tom, sitting around a bar.

PARKER

Do you think that—I was wondering if you'd talk a little bit about the '92 unrest and then Rebuild L.A.

REINHARDT

I never noticed that Rebuild L.A. did anything. Maybe it did, but Tom was just really the opposite of Antonio. Antonio was so lively and trying to get so much attention. And Tom was so quiet and just he looked so strong. But he wasn't a very colorful figure. He was never in any political fights with anyone, except for the police. But I don't recall ever his really fighting with the City Council. He was just quiet, stolid, and I think whenever there was a disagreement, something he would generally just sort of sit down with the person and work it out.

PARKER

And so were you still on the Police Commission? You weren't once you became a judge.

REINHARDT

No.

PARKER

Yeah, okay. Did you remain close to Bradley, or did, were you still advising him kind of at, you know, in the late eighties, early nineties?

REINHARDT

Well, only on major things. Not on a day-to-day basis. It was just if there was something. Not always directly. I mean, I would still talk to Sam or Maury, or Maury was probably gone by then, but talk to Sam or Fran.

PARKER

Fran Savitch?

REINHARDT

Yes. Have you talked to Fran?

PARKER
I haven't. I think she's up in Sacramento now.
REINHARDT
Yes. Tom isn't somebody you'd really say a lot about. I remember when we had the meetings, at Fran's house and Sam, Maury, Fran and I used to meet every Monday night for I don't know how many years. But Tom [unclear]. We would just meet, discuss what the problems were, "What are you going to do?" And then Maury would talk to him. But he would never come, never once.
PARKER
What kind of problems were you guys focused on?
REINHARDT
Well, whatever was going on at the time. Nothing very dramatic. But [unclear] be there and we'd talk about what should Tom do about the issue. I don't remember whether he did what we thought or didn't.
PARKER
So this would have been the late seventies?
REINHARDT
Yes, probably the seventies. Whatever problem politically or in the city there was, we would talk about it and Tom would want a recommendation, but, I mean, there's not a lot to say. He was very decent, very nice, very loyal, and I think he did a lot for the city.
PARKER
Well, thank you. I think that's—unless there's more, that's—
REINHARDT
No.
PARKER
—all the questions I have. Okay.
REINHARDT
Probably more than I had to say. [End of interview]

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