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REGIONAL ORAL HISTORY OFFICE

Chronicle
Dec 28, 1970

Services for Attorney I. D. Bohnett

Funeral services will be held at 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday) for I. D. Bohnett, a prominent San Jose lawyer and conservationist. Mr. Bohnett died on Christmas Day at his home, 940 Plaza drive, San Jose. He was 90.

Mr. Bohnett's wife, Ivadelle, 84, had died only six days before his death. They celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last month.

A descendant of a pioneer Santa Clara county family, Mr. Bohnett received his law degree from the University of California in 1906, where he was a Phi Beta Kapa. He served as deputy county clerk and then entered private practice in 1908 in San Jose.

SON

Mr. Bohnett had been in practice in association with his attorney son, John D. Bohnett, for the past 30 years.

Mr. Bohnett served three two-year terms as a State Assemblyman for Santa Clara county from 1909 to 1915. During this period he was assembly floor leader for Governor Hiram Johnson, a reform Republican.

During the 1930s Mr. Bohnett was successful in his fight to establish the Santa Clara Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

COLLEGE

He was the first chairman of the San Jose State College Advisory Board, retiring from this position in 1966 after 43 year's service.

Surviving are two brothers, Floyd O. Bohnett of Santa Barbara and Karl Bohnett of Campbell; a sister, Hattie Gardener of Campbell; four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The funeral will be from the Oak Hill Mortuary Chapel in San Jose. Burial will be in Oak Hill Memorial Park.

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Lewis D. Bohnett

SANTA CLARA COUNTY PROGRESSIVE

An interview conducted by

Helene M. Brewer and Willa K. Baum

Berkeley
1968

Lewis D. Bohnett

Lewis D. Bohnett

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewers: Helene M. Brewer, associate professor of English, Queens College, New York, and researcher on the California Progressives.
Willa K. Baum, head, Regional Oral History Office.

Time and Setting of Interviews: The afternoons of September 1, 1964, and November 18, 1964. The two interviews were held in Mr. Bohnett's law offices at Bohnett, Hill, Bohnett, Smeed and Collins, Attorneys, in downtown San Jose. Both Mrs. Brewer and Mrs. Baum were present at the first session; only Mrs. Baum was there at the second. There was a telephone call or two during the interviews, but Mr. Bohnett's secretary had been instructed to divert most business during the sessions so there were no other interruptions.

Conduct of the Interviews: The interviews were undertaken to add to the information in the Bancroft Library on the California Progressives, especially to the material in the papers and oral history interview with Philip Bancroft; and in the papers of Chester Rowell, Hiram Johnson, Fremont Older, and other Progressives. Mrs. Brewer was doing research on Francis Heney and offered to help with the interviewing.

A list of questions prepared by Mrs. Brewer was sent to Mr. Bohnett before the first interview, and another list before the second session. He had available his California Legislature directories which had been issued to all members of the legislature. He checked these for the names of persons he mentioned during the course of the interviews.

Editing: The verbatim transcript of the interviews was sent to Mr. Bohnett in March, 1965, but it took several reminders before he returned them, with only a few corrections, in the spring of 1968. The press of business, and an interest in hunting and outdoor activities with his grandchildren had taken up the time he might have put on checking the interviews.

This manuscript is the exact transcription except for Mr. Bohnett's changes.

Willa Baum

August 28, 1968
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

INTRODUCTION

L. D. Bohnett, lawyer and member of the California State Assembly from 1909 to 1914, has lived an active life that extends far beyond the recollections recorded on this tape; for in our interviews we stressed his political career. (This was largely because of limitations of time. In spite of his 86 years, Mr. Bohnett is still a busy man.) The two interviews that comprise this manuscript took place in the Bohnett law offices in San Jose, where he is the senior partner of Bohnett, Hill, Bohnett, Smeed and Collins. With its worn chairs (some of them upholstered in leather and well worn) and its tables stacked with books, it suggests an earlier time when San Jose was still a country town. Mr. Bohnett talked to us across a large desk stacked with books and with what seemed to be reports and papers. Stockily built, with gray hair and bright eyes, he looked like a man who has spent much of his then - 84 years out-of-doors, which indeed he has.

Our intention was to record his recollections of his years in the California State Assembly and his experiences in the LaFollette campaign of 1924. Since he was too busy to turn back to a full review of the activities of 50 years ago, it was of course obvious that his answers would be off-the-cuff. The questions relating to his political career are in large part based on material in the Hiram Johnson, Chester Rowell, and Franklin Hichborn Papers. As is usually the case, his recollections do not quite jibe with documentary material found in letters written at the time. Most of the time, however, his recollections are clearcut and he was able to give us information not easily

available to the historian. We were interested to see that unlike many persons who are asked to recreate the past, he did not overdramatize or overplay his part. If anything, he tended to underplay it.

Mr. Bohnett's description of his early life gives us a Santa Clara farmboy whose youthful reading made him decide "to be a self-made man" and later a lawyer. He became both. Having gone through high school in two years, he worked his way through the University of California (registration 2500). In 1907 he passed the Bar examinations and served as a clerk in the Legislature. In 1909 he was elected assemblyman and soon became the informal floor leader of the combined progressive Republicans and progressive Democrats. In the 1911 and 1913 "revolution" (as he called it) he was the recognized leader and chief parliamentarian of the Progressives. His account of the passage of the Water Commission Act is revealing for the light it throws on the activities of a shrewd and knowledgeable legislator, a man who did not aspire to march at the head of his party or to draft its platforms.

Mr. Bohnett was County Chairman for Senator Robert M. LaFollette's 1924 campaign and nearly succeeded in carrying San Jose. In the highly charged atmosphere of that year, this was an act of courage. The Archives of the Oral History Project contain few if any recollections of a County Chairman of the LaFollette campaign. It is not only for the information contained here but also for the point of view of the narrator that the following reminiscences are fresh and informative.

Helene Maxwell Brewer

August 28, 1968
Women's Faculty Club
University of California at Berkeley

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Bohnett: I was out of school six years between grammar school and high school, and I made up two years by doing the high school four-year course in two years.

Baum: We interviewed Mrs. Warren Olney, Jr., and she graduated in 1895 from the University of California, so that puts her ten years ahead of you, almost.

Bohnett: Yes, nine years. She's probably about five years older than I am.

Baum: She is in her nineties.

Bohnett: I'm eighty four and a half today.

Baum: I'm going to ask you about your political career. We're particularly interested in the Progressive era, about the time you went into politics.

Bohnett: Well, I was elected to the Assembly in November of 1908, that put me in for the 1909 session, but I'd been up there as a committee clerk in the 1907 session so that I saw part of the workings of the old Southern Pacific machine.

Baum: How had you decided to go into politics? You were not planning to go into law at that time?

Bohnett: I finished the elementary school, and my folks wanted me to go to high school but I wouldn't go. I'd been quite a heavy reader of history and so on, and I wanted to be a self-made man. [Laughter]

Baum: What was your father's business?

Bohnett: He was a farmer. That was just one of the kid's notions, you see. Six years later they organized the union high school in our area, so I thought I'd go for a year to develop more of a vocabulary and get a better grip on certain things. I got there late and the principal told me I'd better stay home and get the prunes harvested and then come back to school, which I did. A couple of weeks later he called me into his office, and he was talking and I said, "What are you trying to tell me, Mr. Smith -- that I can do this work in two years?"

He said,"I think you can." So he readjusted the schedule. I dropped out of some of the regular classes and worked by myself and reported to the teachers two or three times a week.

Baum: What high school was that?

Bohnett: Campbell Union High School. At the end of two years I had fourteen E's and one E-plus -- E for excellent, G for good, you know.

Baum: How many children were there in your family?

Bohnett: Eleven.

Baum: Did the rest of them go on to high school?

Bohnett: I was the third. The two older ones did not go to high school, and some of the ones younger than I did and some of them didn't -- I think six of the younger ones went to high school. One of them went to San Jose Normal, now San

Bohnett: Jose State College, directly from grammar school, before they required high school as preliminary to normal work. That was my sister next younger than I. One of my younger brothers went to San Jose Normal after high school. I think there were only two who didn't go to high school -- two older and two younger.

Baum: Had your father completed high school? Or your mother?

Bohnett: No. My father was born and brought up ~~next~~ near Ann Arbor, Michigan, and his schooling consisted of, oh, I don't know how many years in the primary school. He went three months to public school and three months to the Lutheran parochial school.

Brewer: What brought your father out here?

Bohnett: I don't know if it was wanderlust or that he just wanted to come here, had heard of California and wanted to come. He didn't come until the railroad was built; he didn't come here until '71. My mother was born here in 1855, in this county. All the education she had was in the Cambrian Schoolhouse, and all her eleven children went through that school and some of her grandchildren and some of her great-grandchildren.

Baum: Was she from a farm family also?

Bohnett: Yes. Her mother, my grandmother, preempted 160 acres immediately adjoining the Cambrian school in 1863.

Baum: So your family goes back pretty far in this area.

Bonnett: Jose State College, [illegible]

they [illegible]

[illegible]

younger [illegible]

school. [illegible]

high school -- [illegible]

Baum: [illegible] your father [illegible]

Bonnett: [illegible]

[illegible]

year [illegible]

month [illegible]

[illegible]

Brewer: [illegible]

Bonnett: I don't know [illegible]

to come [illegible]

[illegible]: "[illegible]

some [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Baum: [illegible]

Bonnett: [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]: [illegible] your [illegible]

Bohnett: Well, we're fairly well rooted in Santa Clara County.

Baum: Were your parents interested in politics, particularly?

Bohnett: No.

Baum: What did they think when you went off to college?

Bohnett: Oh, they were for it. After I found I could do the high school work in two years, I planned on finishing school there and then going back to the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, to take a special law course. You could take it directly from high school, didn't have to go to college at that time. Dr. Charles Noble of the mathematics department at the University of California, was examining the high schools for accrediting, and he wrote to the principal of my high school after he had visited, wanting to know if he could arrange for me to have dinner with him, so I did. He talked me into going to the University of California.

Baum: You'd already decided that you were going into law, though.

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: This sounds unusual, if you came from a farm family.

Bohnett: Oh, I don't know. Reading history, it all seemed to be the most logical thing for me.

Baum: How old were you when you made that decision?

Bohnett: Twenty.

Baum: And then you went into the University of California. How

Baum: long were you there?

Bohnett: Four years.

Baum: Do you remember any of the professors particularly?

Bohnett: Professor Ferguson, who taught ancient history. I can't think of his first name right off the bat. Our high school wasn't accredited in all subjects, and I had to take some of the entrance examinations at the old Harmon Gymnasium, an old wooden structure, tables spread all around. I was way at the rear end of it, nobody near me, sitting at a table waiting for them to pass out the bluebooks, and Ferguson himself came to the opposite side of the table and handed me a bluebook, stuck out his hand, "How do you do, Mr. Bohnett? What are you doing here? I thought you were going to the University of Michigan." All he had seen of me was from examining the school; he examined in history and Latin. I thought it was the most remarkable instance of memory I ever saw.

And Dr. Noble, of course, in the mathematics department. There were several of them who were unmarried and roomed together at what they called "The Barn." Dr. Bancroft, who later went to the University of Arizona as president, I believe; and there was a political science teacher -- I can't think of his name. They were my particular friends on the faculty. I became very well acquainted

Bohnett: with Dr. Price of the Latin department.

Baum: Did you know these professors personally?

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: Where did you live?

Bohnett: The first semester I lived with a private family, the second semester I lived in the basement of a boarding house on Bancroft Way called Grey Gables. I don't know whether it's still there or not.

Baum: Oh, they just tore that down, about a year ago.

Bohnett: They had a basement about half below ground, and I lived there one semester. Early in my sophomore year I went to what was then an eating club, the Abracadabra. For several years it was the local fraternity, now it's, I believe, Delta Chi, a national fraternity.

Baum: Where was that?

Bohnett: Oh, it moved around. It was ~~north~~ south of the campus as long as I was there and for a long time afterward. I don't know where Delta Chi is now.

Baum: You might not be able to find your way around now, it's changed so much.

Bohnett: The Life Science Building is the area where we did most of our drilling, the University Cadets. Is the football statue still there?

Baum: Oh, yes.

Bohnett: Well, just as you go up the pathway to the University, a

Bohnett: little beyond that and to the left was the football field and track. The Life Science took all of that and most of our parade ground.

When I entered they were just building the Hearst Mining Building and Greek Theater.

Brewer: Were you in sports?

Bohnett: No, I was not an athlete. I enjoyed them, I watched them, but my chief activity was the Californian. I started on that when I entered, and I was editor the first semester of my senior year.

Baum: Were you interested in writing?

Bohnett: Well, I never --

Baum: Were you in debates?

Bohnett: I was in the Congress Debating Society; I was on the freshman debating team. We happened to beat the sophomores that year; we debated Congress teams against the Senate teams -- the two debating societies.

Brewer: Do you remember what you debated on?

Bohnett: Well, I don't remember the exact question, but the substance of it was whether coeducation was better than -- [laughing] whether it was good or bad. We won it; we had the affirmative, that coeducation was beneficial. I remember that one of the professors had just written an article on coeducation and I happened to be quoting him a lot, and I didn't know it until we actually entered the room that he hap-

Bohnett: pened to be one of the judges. [Laughter] I noticed that when I began to quote him that the other judges sitting alongside of him nudged each other.

Baum: Were there many girls on campus?

Bohnett: Oh, yes. I think about half -- I wouldn't know the proportions, but there were a lot of them. They held their own.

Baum: Did you know most of your classmates, or was the college too big by this time?

Bohnett: Well, in the last political fight they had on the campus I went through the directory and checked those that I knew well enough to speak to when I met them on the campus -- I never counted them up, but I knew over half the student body. There were between 2,500 and 2,600 students, as I recall it, at the time.

Baum: Were the students interested in politics?

Bohnett: Not as they are now.

Baum: Were you interested in politics?

Bohnett: Yes. The first time I was old enough to vote for President was in 1904, while I was there, and I couldn't vote because I had the measles. I was quarantined. [Laughter]

Baum: Who would you have voted for?

Bohnett: I would have voted for Teddy Roosevelt.

Baum: You were already a Progressive supporter; I guess they were

Baum: still Republicans then, though.

Bohnett: Yes. In 1907 when I was in Sacramento as a committee clerk, that was the last year that the Southern Pacific political machine had full control of the Republican Party. W.F. Herrin was the political boss, and Jere Burke was the man who handled his work at the legislature. In 1907 the state capitol was being renovated entirely, so the legislature met in, I think, Redman's Hall, and I was there to watch. Jere Burke had an office in the building and a number of assistants, and he was sending them in with orders. We had one assemblyman from this county who was rather a weak sister, and I saw Burke one day come up -- he thought this man might slip on him -- and sit with him while the roll was called, to be sure he voted according to the machine. He'd stand at the door and send his assistants in to see that this man or that man, members of the Assembly, knew their orders. It was wide open.

Baum: They didn't try to hide it.

Bohnett: They didn't try to hide anything. They worked right out in the open, they ran things.

Baum: Did the legislators seem to object to that? They didn't mind being pushed around that way?

Bohnett: No. They seemed to enjoy it all right.

Baum: How did you decide to go up to Sacramento as a clerk?

Bohnett: I was interested in politics. And I got $3 a day, which was big pay because when I'd worked on a farm the most I ever got was $2 a day for ten hours of hard work. When I worked on the county roads -- No, I got $1.50 for working on a farm, and on the county roads I got $2 for eight hours. I worked on my father's ranch most of the time, where I got board and room and clothes.

Baum: How many hours a day did you work as a clerk?

Bohnett: Oh, there weren't any hours. We did very little work, spent most of the time just watching things. It was a joke as far as the work's concerned.

Brewer: What were you hired to do?

Bohnett: Nothing. [Laughter] We were supposed to take minutes, but they didn't keep any permanent minutes so that didn't mean anything.

I got acquainted with some of the members of the Assembly who returned in the 1909 session when I went up as a member. By that time, what'll we call them, the rebels, the Progressives, were beginning to get quite active in the state. We could have organized the Assembly ourselves if we had known our strength, but that didn't develop until later. We got through some Progressive legislation at that time; we got the first direct primary law through in 1909, and in 1911 to 1913 we organized the Assembly and ran it.

Baum: When you say that there were already quite a few Progressives in the legislature, how had they gotten in?

Bohnett: Ordinary election.

Baum: In 1909, before Johnson -- ?

Bohnett: Well, there was A.H. Hewett, from Marysville; C.C. Young of Berkeley, who later became governor; Robert L. Telfer, from this county; Dan Hayes -- they were elected by labor, Telfer was a Progressive, Hayes was neither definitely Progressive nor a machine man. And there were just people, like Young and myself, that wanted to get into politics and were against the machine. I just went out and saw the delegates at the county convention -- it was the last county convention ever held in this county -- and got their votes. I suppose Young did the same thing.

Baum: You had been hoping to go into politics all along? This was your interest, was it not?

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: And you just went out and spoke to the delegates? You got their approval.

Bohnett: Yes. Of course, each sub-district, that is, the county officers, were nominated by the convention as a whole, and the convention broke up and each Assembly district had its own meeting, and so on. Each township had its own meeting and nominated a justice of the peace and constable. In the Assembly district in which I was a

Bohnett: candidate I got the vote.

Baum: You got the Republican nomination?

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: Did you seek to represent another interest than the regular -- Was there a fight on that?

Bohnett: No, there was no fight within the Republican Party at that time. I've forgotten whether the Lincoln-Roosevelt League had been organized before the 1908 election or not; I know it took a very prominent part in the 1910 campaign, when Johnson was the candidate of the League, which was an organization within the Republican Party opposed to the Southern Pacific machine. Some of the Progressives in the 1909 session may have been representing the League if it was then organized.

Baum: I think there were some local leagues around, maybe not united, but popping up here and there.

Bohnett: At any rate, they didn't coagulate into a general organization until the first primary election in 1910.

Baum: Who was your predecessor for the Assembly?

Bohnett: I think a man named Stanley, a Republican. This county was solidly Republican.

Baum: Did he decide to retire or did you take the nomination away from him?

Bohnett: I beat him out. He was a candidate for renomination and

Bonnett: candidate I got the vote.

Baum: You got the Republican nomination.

Bonnett: Yes.

Baum: Did you back to [illegible] regular -- Was there [illegible]

Bonnett: No, there was no fight with the [illegible] the size. I've [illegible] League had been organized before [illegible] I know it took a very prominent [illegible] Then Johnson was the [illegible] an organization within the [illegible] the Southern Pacific machine. [illegible] in the 1924 session [illegible] if it was then organized so.

Baum: I think there were [illegible] waited. But pushing [illegible] there.

Bonnett: At any rate, they didn't come [illegible] nation until the first primary [illegible].

Baum: Who was your primary [illegible]

Bonnett: I think [illegible] was solidly behind me.

Baum: Did he decide to [illegible] away from him?

Bonnett: I beat him [illegible]

Bohnett: re-election.

Baum: Was he more of a Southern Pacific man?

Bohnett: He was in the organization.

So in that 1909 session, after we found our strength, we kind of organized the opposition and they elected me as floor leader. There were six names on the roll call ahead of me, and they were all machine men. So there'd be six "ayes" and then a "no." Some of the members said, "We'll just wait for the seventh vote, then we know how we're going to vote."

Baum: So the opposition followed your vote.

Bohnett: Largely, on measures that were of a political nature. Of course on local matters there were differences. We didn't have a closely-knit machine. They weren't taking orders, but I wasn't married and I spent my nights studying the bills and they figured that I was more familiar with the matters than they were and if they didn't have a particular interest in this or that, they'd follow my vote.

Baum: Were all these men you're speaking of Republicans? Were there some Democrats?

Bohnett: There were some Democrats. In fact, on general legislation that was not partisan in nature I think there were as many Democrats voting Progressive as voted for the machine.

Brewer: Did you caucus very much?

Bohnett: Well, we had two or three meetings, as a group. I remember just before adjournment of the 1909 session they called a dinner party caucus, and of course the machine got wind of it and when we walked into the dining room there was Jake Transuo, who was the leader in the Assembly of the machine group, sitting there waiting for us.

Baum: When he saw you come in, would that go against you in your next campaign?

Bohnett: Oh, no. We weren't trying to hide anything.

Baum: He didn't have anything to take revenge on you about?

Bohnett: No.

Baum: And no power.

Bohnett: No. The legislature was just about to adjourn. Then in 1911, of course, by common consent -- I don't think they held a caucus, they just considered me as leader. The leader just had to see that the vote to adjourn was made -- it amounts really to being the chief parliamentarian on the floor, to see that nothing was slipped over. You had to keep pretty well posted on the bills, as to what they were and what was behind them, and where they were on the calendar.

Baum: Did you have to round up members who were off the floor when you needed them?

Bohnett: Well, they kept in line pretty well. I tried to get them to let me know where they would be when they went out, so we could get in touch if there was a call.

But 1911 was the big session. Nineteen-thirteen, too. I've always referred to it as the revolution. Some of the principal bills were passed. In 1909 we passed the Railroad Commission Act. They gave me the privilege of introducing that -- I didn't write it, but I introduced it. And the Blue Sky Law and workmen's compensation, and they made some improvements in the direct primary -- they made quite a few changes. It was in 1913 that we passed the Blue Sky Law, not in 1909. I remember Senator Cartwright from Fresno County was opposed to the Blue Sky Law. I think the official title was the Corporate Securities Act; at any rate, it created the office of corporation commissioner. When he saw he couldn't beat it, he fought for it to become effective as late as possible. The two houses disagreed on the effective date, and we had a ~~pre-~~free conference; I was on the committee from the Assembly and Benedict, I remember, was another member of the committee. He was from Los Angeles. Lee Gates was chairman of the joint committee. We worked out all the other changes, and then when it came to the effective date -- it was about three o'clock in the morning, the Assembly clock had already

Bohnett: been stopped and we were just working on borrowed time -- finally I turned to Benedict and said, "You second every motion I make."

So I made a motion that the date be the first of a certain month. Benedict seconded it and it was voted down. I made another motion that it be the fifteenth of that month and that was voted down. Finally we made it in November two years later. Lee Gates, the chairman, said, "Oh, I think that's enough time, Senator Cartwright." So it got by, about four o'clock in the morning.

Baum: So they weren't willing to put it into effect immediately.

Bohnett: No. Then that was held up by the referendum petition. That and the Water Commission Act and the red light abatement bill -- those three were all held up by referendum petition but all three were carried by popular vote.

Baum: So this revolutionary session of 1911 -- did you have much committee work?

Bohnett: Oh, yes.

Baum: About how many months of the year did you spend in Sacramento?

Bohnett: That's another point. In 1909 of course it was a continuous session. Senator Caminetti introduced a constitutional amendment providing for a divided session, that is, you'd go up thirty days and then have a recess and re-

Bohnett: convene at a certain time. I think that started in 1911, I'm not sure.

Brewer: Did you vote for Caminetti's bill for the divided session?

Bohnett: I think I voted for it if I remember rightly, although I was not in favor of it. I was in favor of letting the people vote on it as a constitutional amendment. It never did seem to accomplish much of anything, just delayed things.

Brewer: Franklin Hichborn said that Anthony Caminetti was really a lovely old man, and that people were so fond of him that they voted it through. Is that right?

Bohnett: That's right. He was very popular among the members of the legislature. You mentioned Hichborn; Hichborn wrote his first history of the legislature in 1909. It so happened he had a list of bills, Progressive bills, and he tabulated the vote on those bills and arranged them alphabetically. There were about twenty-six of us out of eighty who voted for all these bills that he mentioned. I was at the head of the list, alphabetically, so when the 1911 session convened a lot of the machine men, particularly from Los Angeles and the South, didn't come back. They had a special session of the legislature between the election and the meeting of the legislature, so we saw those fellows. I remember Billy Hanlin from Los Angeles,

Bohnett: who was defeated, said, "You know, Bohnett, you could have been elected mayor of Los Angeles, just on the strength of Hichborn's book." [Laughter] But I was only one of twenty-six.

Brewer: Would you say that Hichborn's history had considerable influence?

Bohnett: I think it did. I know the machine men who were defeated felt that it was very effective. Hanlin's remark is indicative of their feeling.

Brewer: Hichborn was a remarkable man, wasn't he?

Bohnett: Yes, very much so. A man of strong principles. If he was for you, why, he would do a lot for you. If he had a grievance against you he never forgot it; he'd pound away at it the rest of his life. But he was a fine man.

Baum: Did he have grievances against many people? Were they personal?

Bohnett: No, impersonal. For instance, he would never write a testimonial in favor of Jere Burke, the legislative representative of the Southern Pacific machine.

Baum: Jere Burke came down to San Jose then, didn't he?

Bohnett: I don't know.

Baum: Was there much evidence of Southern Pacific influence in county politics or local politics?

Bohnett: Well, they tried to keep things in line. They would control

Bohnett: the county conventions which nominated the legislators.

Baum: How about county officials? Did they put their finger in there, too?

Bohnett: Yes, to a considerable extent. They had local agents.

Baum: Were they very strong in Santa Clara County?

Bohnett: Oh, yes. Although this was one of the strongest counties for the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. I remember some of us asked Hiram Johnson at one time to appoint some man here for some state office, and Hiram Johnson said, "What have you to say for his recommendations, other than that he comes from Santa Clara County?" [Laughter]

Incidentally, Johnson didn't care much for the right of appointment. Of course, he appointed lots of men, but he said, "The trouble with it is every time you make an appointment you make ten enemies and one ingrate." [Laughter

Baum: When you went about getting yourself elected the first time, in 1909, did you have to do much campaigning?

Bohnett: No. Nomination was tantamount to election. That first campaign cost me exactly $68. [Laughter]

Brewer: What was your district?

Bohnett: Let me see ... It included Campbell, ~~Walnut,~~ Moreland Hamilton, out to Almaden, to the fourth ward in San Jose -- that was a tough ward. "Goosetown" they called it; Almaden Avenue -- it was Orchard Street then -- largely Mexican population out that way, and Italian immigrants. That was the general area.

Baum: Was the district largely Republican, or did the Democrats put up a fight?

Bohnett: Santa Clara County was strongly Republican. I didn't have to campaign. The county committee assessed the candidates for the legislature $50; I paid that, and I paid $18 otherwise.

Baum: Did the cost go up as years went on, to get elected?

Bohnett: Oh, yes. Next time it was under the direct primary. I don't remember just what it cost me, but it was a lot more. I sent out a letter to every registered voter, who was registered as a Republican -- of course nobody else could vote in that primary. Most of the politicians in the county thought I'd be snowed under, but I got the vote.

Baum: Who was running against you? You're speaking of 1911.

Bohnett: Nineteen-ten. The man who had been elected in 1906 and was a member of the 1907 legislature, my predecessor.

Baum: You said that was Stanley.

Bohnett: No, let me see. He was in 1905, because Stanley succeeded him and I succeeded Stanley. I can't think of his name now.

Baum: What did he represent in ideas that were different from yours?

Bohnett: He was strictly a machine man. Didn't have any ideas of his own, just what was passed up to him. His immediate boss was ~~Druffel~~ Druffel of the Pacific Manufacturing Company in

Bohnett: Santa Clara.

Baum: Did you have to accept speaking engagements at all kinds of things in order to be seen?

Bohnett: Oh, yes. I was working in the office one afternoon, on a Saturday -- Saturday wasn't a holiday then -- and an Italian came into the office and introduced himself as the king of Goosetown. I could hardly understand him, but he got over that he had a cigar factory out on Orchard Street and wanted me to come out and see him. "I'll carry that precinct for you."

So next Saturday afternoon I went out. I found that he lived just across the street from the factory, so I had to go over to the house. He insisted on going down into the basement, it wasn't concrete, just earth, lined with big casks of wine, Dago red, old sour stuff. He got out some water goblets. You'd hold them up to the light and couldn't see through them. [Laughter] At any rate, I drank three of those big goblets of wine, and then went across the street to the cigar factory and bought a box of cigars. A little crowd gathered around and we ~~chattered~~ chatted and talked a while and I passed out the cigars and a lot of cards and tried to get away. One of the fellows could talk better English, and he wanted me to go back and have another drink with him. [Laughter] So this fellow who could talk

Bohnett: better English said, "You'd better go -- you may be sorry if you don't."

So I went back with him, and he poured out two more goblets, so I drank five of those goblets full of that stuff that hadn't even ripened yet. But I had sense enough not to come back uptown. I just headed for the suburbs and walked the rest of the afternoon.

Baum: So that's what you had to do to campaign. [Laughter] Did you carry that ward?

Bohnett: On election night I went up to the Mercury office -- the Hayes brothers ran it then -- and they were there and the returns were coming in. I'd been getting returns elsewhere from Campbell and ~~Walnut~~ Moreland and I was quite sure I'd been elected -- nominated, I mean. J.O. Hayes said, "Well, just wait till the 30th and 31st precincts come in." That was Goosetown. So they came in, and I was just defeated there -- I almost carried those two precincts. So those five goblets of wine did some good. [Laughing]

Brewer: When you were in the legislature, did you have some particular duties in relation to Santa Clara County?

Bohnett: Well, of course we had to get our county government bill through -- fixing the salaries and all of that kind of stuff. We had to do that at each session. But that was a matter of course. The legislature as a whole never ques-

Bohnett: tioned what the delegation from each county wanted in the way of its own government. They would back up the delegation, unless it was some measure that had a statewide political effect, which was very seldom. For instance, Kern County was a machine-controlled county, and there was a Progressive elected down there by some group and he came up, and we backed him against the rest of the delegation as to the Kern County measures. But that's the only instance I think of where we didn't go along with the majority of the delegation.

Brewer: Does a member of the legislature have to look after the interests of his own particular community? Does he keep in touch -- did he keep in touch with his home town?

Bohnett: I think they did pretty generally. Of course when it comes to general legislation, the interests of one community are more or less like the interests of all the other communities. Now, like their putting a mile and a half limit around Stanford University -- no liquor can be sold within a mile and a half of the university. I think it's in the constitution so far as the University of California is concerned, but a man named Holmquist was representing San Mateo County at that time -- in 1909 -- and Dan Hayes from this county represented the northern end of this county, that is, including Stanford. Well, of course Hayes wouldn't introduce the bill so they had Holmquist introduce it; the bill effected the southern end of his county. But he couldn't put it over so they

Bonnett: [illegible] what the delegation from each county [illegible] the way of its own government. They would [illegible] delegation, [illegible] it was some reason [illegible] wide political effect, [illegible] very [illegible] instance, [illegible] was a [illegible] country, and there was [illegible] reserve [illegible] strong and be [illegible] of the [illegible] we [illegible] county's [illegible] of where we didn't [illegible] among [illegible] of the [illegible].

Brewer: [illegible] the [illegible] to [illegible] after the interests of his own [illegible] in touch -- [illegible] with [illegible]

Bonnett: I think they did [illegible]. Of course [illegible] comes to general [illegible] the interests of one [illegible] municipality [illegible] other [illegible]. Now, like [illegible] and a small limit around [illegible] -- [illegible] can be sold within a [illegible] of [illegible]. I think it's in the constitution [illegible] of California is concerned, but [illegible] representing [illegible] and [illegible] and of this county, [illegible]. [illegible] of course [illegible] Hampshire [illegible] and of the county. But he [illegible] put [illegible] the

Bohnett: asked me to take charge of it, and I engineered it through.

Does that answer your question? That was a local matter, and that way it worked out.

Brewer: It sounds as though your experience as a parliamentarian was really pretty good.

Bohnett: Well, I might brag a little -- it just seemed to come naturally to me. You just have to be on your toes. In 1913 my seatmate was a justice of the peace from Monterey County, Judge Alexander. After a week or two up there he said to me one day -- there was practically a line at my desk every recess, people coming to my desk: "How do you get this bill through? How do you pass that bill?" And he turned to me and said, "I just can't understand how you do it." Well, some men can saw a board straight without any effort. I have to draw a line and be very careful. Some people are built to do different things, and that just came natural to me.

In 1913 we had a scrap as to who would be speaker. I had spoken to Benedict and he promised to be with me. I thought he might be the candidate from Los Angeles. Bill Sutherland of Fresno at the end of the 1911 session had asked me if I was going to be a candidate for speaker, and I said I thought I was. He said, "Well, I want to be if you're not, but if you're going to be a candidate I'll

Bohnett: be with you. You've earned it." And after they both had promised to be with me, they both came out against me -- each of them as candidate ~~for~~ himself. We had quite a scrap, and none of us had enough to be elected. Rather than run it to a showdown I went to Benedict the night before the legislature opened and told him that we'd all be better off if none of us ran and we put in C.C. Young as speaker. He didn't agree for a while, and I said, "All right, I'll throw my votes to Sutherland." Well, he'd rather have Young than Sutherland, so he agreed to vote for Young.

Then I went to Sutherland and said the same thing. He'd rather have Young than Benedict. So I went to the hotel where Young was staying and told him he was speaker -- this was 1:30 or 2 o'clock in the morning. He said, "Well, don't be too sure. Benedict will change his mind and be back in the fight by morning." The next morning the first man I met after I went down to the hotel was Benedict, and he said, "You said you'd rather be head of the Judiciary Committee and floor leader than speaker, but you want speaker for the prestige. I want to be speaker as much as anything else, but I want to be a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California."

Bohnett: But I told him he'd have to stay put -- it was either Young or Sutherland. So that was it. That's the way Young got to be speaker.

Brewer: I keep running into mention of Benedict in correspondence.

Bohnett: He had a very sharp pointed nose. Bill Flint, who was assemblyman from San ~~Bernardino~~ Benito County, said once, "Did you ever know a man with that kind of nose who wasn't always sticking his nose into other people's business?" [Laughter] Bill was a machine man, and didn't like Benedict's Progressive attitudes.

I brought up the speakership fight because that's the year we had the Johnson administration bills -- at the beginning there were ten of them, and they were called the Ten Commandments. Later the eleventh was added. We had them passed out among different men, and they weren't getting along very fast so the governor asked me down to his office one day and wanted to know if I wouldn't take charge of them. He said, "Sutherland and Benedict tell me you're the only man who can get them through the Assembly right away." I said, "Sure I would," and I did. The Senate was always referring to the Assembly as "the Cave of the Winds." [Laughter] Hot air and no work.

Well, two or three weeks later I went to the governor

Bohnett: and asked if he'd been keeping in touch with the legislation and he said, "Yes, I have." "Have you noticed that in the Cave of the Winds we've passed ten of the eleven bills?" "Yes," he said, "And I've been calling the senators' attention to that, too."

You've just to be on the job, and ride herd all the time, to get things done.

Baum: Was this pushed through by a lot of personal contacts? Was that the chief way you operated?

Bohnett: Yes, and keeping tab on the calendar, being on the job at the right time to see that action was taken on this bill today and not tomorrow or next week; seeing that it was pressed in the committee. I don't mean any illegitimate pressure, just seeing that things are moved along.

Baum: Did the legislators realize that you were speaking for Johnson, representing his interests in pushing them through?

Bohnett: Yes. Those particular bills, yes. And then having helped so many of the members with bills from their counties and so on, they'd feel under obligation and unless they had some particular reason for opposing the bill they'd take my word on it.

Baum: When you went in, in 1909, you were not very old.

Robnett: and asked if he'd been working [illegible] through [illegible] the legislation and he said, "Yes, I have." [illegible] noticed that in the [illegible] we've passed [illegible] of the eleven bills [illegible] I'm [illegible] calling the members' [illegible] "Yes."

We've just [illegible] time, to get [illegible].

Dunn: [illegible] this [illegible] that the obligation you [illegible]

Robnett: Yes. And [illegible] at the right time [illegible] bill today [illegible] it was passed in the committee. [illegible] ultimate [illegible] along.

Dunn: Did the legislature [illegible] Robnett: Yes. Those particular bills [illegible] so many of the [illegible] so on, I'm'd [illegible] same [illegible] reason [illegible] my work on it.

Dunn: Then you [illegible]

Bohnett: I was twenty-eight.

Baum: Was that a disadvantage in making yourself recognized? Did they think you were just a boy?

Bohnett: It was a disadvantage among some of the delegates at the convention, when I sought the nomination. I remember one man I talked to while he was under his automobile making some repairs, and when he crawled out he looked me over and said, "Well, there's one thing against you." I said, "What's that?" "You're pretty young for that office, aren't you?" I said, "Well, I'm twenty-eight." He said, "I didn't think you were twenty-one yet." [Laughter]

Brewer: Did you work much with Chester Rowell in Sacramento?

Bohnett: He wasn't around Sacramento too much. He was editor of the Fresno Republican and he gave a lot of advice and would come up to Sacramento occasionally. I knew him, and he was a very peculiar man -- brilliant, but some days he would be very friendly, and talk freely, and other days his mind would be a hundred miles away, he'd hardly know you.

Brewer: A person of moods, then.

Bohnett: It would seem that way. Not deliberate, just his mind would be preoccupied. My wife and I were once stopping at the Fresno Hotel, and it was early in the morning, one

Bohnett: o'clock I think it was, and we were walking down the street a ways and we met Rowell coming from his newspaper office. He had the habit of writing his editorials about midnight, and he was coming back to his home. He stopped and I guess we talked for an hour there, standing on the sidewalk. I think that's the longest conversation I ever had with him. Some way or other Teddy Roosevelt came up in the conversation, and I remarked, "I've never considered Roosevelt one of the world's great thinkers." He said, "Why, of course not. He's not a firsthand thinker at all, but he's an excellent secondhand thinker." [Laughter] I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well, he's in contact with the best thought in the world. He has the ability to pick out that which the people will accept; he'll take that from the man who thought it out and put it over." He had the ability to pick out the wheat from the chaff -- that isn't the way he put it, but that was the idea.

Irving Martin, editor of the Stockton Record, I remember hearing say one time that of all the men he knew, Rowell had the best mind of any. Such a collection of information, and he had it all pigeon-holed. He said, "Bring up any subject, and he can reach into the right pigeon-hole and discuss it. It's all available."

Hobnett: o'clock [illegible] it was, and we were [illegible]
street a very and as yet [illegible] [illegible] to news-
paper offices. [illegible] and the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
less about [illegible]. [illegible] he was [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Brewer: Evidently Rowell never forgot anything.

Bohnett: He had a wonderful mind. I don't know how many languages he spoke.

Baum: Would you consider him an original thinker?

Bohnett: Yes, I would.

Brewer: How much of a force do you think he was in the Progressive Republican movement?

Bohnett: Oh, he was a very considerable force. He had the leading paper in the San Joaquin Valley. With Irving Martin's paper in Stockton, those were the two big Progressive newspapers in the San Joaquin Valley. The Bee papers were Democratic, of course, but they were also Progressive. So those papers were a very great force.

Brewer: Did you know Hiram Johnson very well? How did he strike you?

Bohnett: Johnson had a very agreeable personality. I liked the man immensely. He was not snobbish in any way. When we first met I think he looked upon me as a kid, but as I told you in the session of '13 he asked me to take over because I was the only one who could get his program through the Assembly quickly. I remember one evening he called a number of us Progressives down to his office, which was in the 1911 session, I think, before the 1912 campaign. He had two letters there, one from Teddy Roose-

Bohnett: velt and one from LaFollette of Wisconsin, both of them discussing the national situation and what should be done in the election campaign. He wanted to know what we thought. Well, in my judgment there was no comparison between the dedication of the two men. Roosevelt's was so personal in his personal ambition, compared with LaFollette's. LaFollette's was all for the promotion of Progressive legislation, very little personal ambition shown in it. I think that was the opinion of everybody there, including Johnson. When I mentioned it Johnson said, "Yes, there's no question about it." The feeling was all in favor of LaFollette, but of course it didn't turn out that way.

Baum: It seemed to you that Johnson would have preferred LaFollette?

Bohnett: Yes.

Brewer: But by January he certainly didn't, did he?

Bohnett: Well, there's no use splitting a movement when you've realized that your favorite can't win. There comes a time when in order to preserve the movement you have to reject some of your personal feelings. I do not think for a minute that Johnson went over to Roosevelt for the sake of getting the Vice-Presidential nomination. I don't

Bohnett: think he was particularly interested in that. But at the time he read those letters he figured that LaFollette presented the better picture.

Baum: Was it your impression that most of the Progressives in the legislature agreed with him?

Bohnett: I don't know, I never heard any of them discuss it, except at that one meeting in the governor's office.

Baum: I've spoken to people who were delegates, and they were so enthusiastic about Roosevelt that I thought LaFollette didn't have a chance.

Bohnett: That's right. You could see that right from the beginning, even when we were discussing those letters.

Brewer: Did you know William Kent?

Bohnett: I knew him practically not at all. I have no personal recollection of him.

Brewer: I wondered if you had talked much with him and Pardee in connection with water conservation, which they were concerned with.

Bohnett: I never had any conversations with them about our local water conservation. Of course they had a big fight on the Water Commission Act, which was finally enacted in the 1913 session. I saved that twice during its passage through the legislature, and when it came up for final passage, the third reading, in the Assembly it was a very

Bohnett: van, sitting across the aisle -- I had already voted to agree -- said, "It's going easily, isn't it?" People were at my desk asking me questions and I didn't really know what we were voting on. I said, "What are we voting on?" He said, "The Water Commission Act." And just then the page came down: "The speaker wants to see you." I went up and Young, handing me the gavel, said, "You take over. Hell's going to break loose." I took over and I watched the clerks write down the votes, and as soon as they finished the roll call I said, "What is it?"

"Forty-one ayes and so many noes."

I brought the gavel down. "Forty-one ayes and so many noes. The Senate amendments are concurred in."

Oh, gee! The aisle was filled with men who wanted to change their votes. They were half-drunk, some of them. I just kept the gavel: "Call the next matter," and we went right on.

Baum: They hadn't realized what they were voting on? They were not paying attention?

Bohnett: No.

Baum: So it sort of sneaked through.

Bohnett: Well, we had the votes but it meant spending a couple of hours with the clock stopped getting them in to vote. It was just a question of using strong-arm methods or taking maybe a couple of hours, and I used strong-arm

Bohnett: methods. They were awfully sore.

Baum: This was the end of 1913?

Bohnett: Yes. That was held up by a referendum petition, too.

Brewer: Hichborn said that the utilities people opposed the Water Commission Act.

Bohnett: I hadn't taken any particular part in that in the early part of the session. As it was one of the Ten Commandments I got into it and realized it was a good thing, so while the people from Southern California were the ones that were handling it I jumped into it in these two crises.

Baum: Did you have to do much getting hold of people on the outside and trying to persuade them to vote this way or that?

Bohnett: Well, I used to talk with them during recess. I never went to hotel rooms or anything like that to talk to them, much.

Baum: You didn't have to plan dinners or get-togethers like that?

Bohnett: No. Never did that.

Baum: Were there lobbyists around doing that kind of thing?

Bohnett: Yes. There were lobbyists around all the time. I'd let them buy my lunch or dinner if they wanted to, so they could talk to me. I didn't have time to talk to them on the floor, but I didn't consider that bribery. It was the only time I could talk to them. Only once in my six years'

Bohnett: experience was there any hint of unlawful enterprise. A man named ~~Keek~~ Kuck, I think from Los Angeles, introduced an anti-cigarette bill. Well, he was a chain-smoker. He either did it as a joke, or an invitation to a bribe, I don't know. At any rate, a whole swarm of tobacco representatives came in, one of them from my neighborhood and now in the advertising business from San Francisco; he came up and among other things he said to me, I've always assumed as an invitation to me to accept something, "Well, don't be a damn fool all your life." [Laughing] That was the nearest I ever had anybody come to offering me a bribe.

Baum: How about in the legislature of 1907, before the reform period? Were there bribes being offered that you might have observed?

Bohnett: I imagine that there were some, but I don't know. And I imagine in the later sessions there probably were some.

Baum: In the 1910 election for governor, Theodore Bell was the Democratic candidate opposing Johnson. Was he supported by the Southern Pacific?

Bohnett: I don't think so. Southern Pacific didn't need to do much with the Democrats. At that time they were like the Prohibition Party.

Baum: They couldn't get elected.

Bohnett: No.

Baum: The S.P. must have known it wouldn't be good for them if

Bohnett: experience was there are bits of material [illegible]

[illegible] speed back, I [illegible]

an anti-aircraft [illegible]. [illegible]

[illegible]

I don't know. [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] from [illegible]

[illegible] up and down [illegible]

[illegible] assumed [illegible]

[illegible]. Don't [illegible]

[illegible] was the [illegible]

[illegible] a bridge.

Baum: How about in [illegible]

period? [illegible]

have observed

Bohnett: I imagine [illegible]

I imagine [illegible]

Baum: In the [illegible]

[illegible]

by the [illegible]

Bohnett: I don't think so. [illegible]

with the [illegible]

[illegible] Band).

[illegible] They couldn't [illegible]

Bohnett: [illegible]

Baum: The [illegible]

Baum: Johnson got elected.

Bohnett: No. But after trying to hold people in line in one party for several decades, why, it's pretty hard to make them switch overnight. From the time I can remember anything about politics, Bud was the only Democratic governor -- elected in 1894, I think I was -- until Olson was elected in 1938.

Baum: You opened your law practice in 1908? in San Jose?

Bohnett: Yes. March 2nd.

Baum: Were you with somebody else?

Bohnett: No, by myself. I've added people from time to time.

Baum: What kind of law did you try to specialize in?

Bohnett: General practice, but very few criminal cases. I personally have never handled criminal cases.

Baum: And could you squeeze that in satisfactorily with your legislative work?

Bohnett: Yes. Of course I didn't have a big practice when I first went to the legislature. I could keep things going by telephone and mail much of the time.

Baum: And did you have enough time off from Sacramento to come back and keep your office running?

Bohnett: Yes. I didn't come down often, maybe three or four times during the session.

Baum: You say you were able to do some of your work because you were a single man and had your evenings free.

Bohnett: Well, that was only the first session.

Baum: When did you marry?

Bohnett: In 1910. It'll be fifty-four years in November.

Baum: Did your wife come up to Sacramento with you?

Bohnett: Oh, yes. She was there all the time, enjoyed it very much.

Baum: Was she a local girl?

Bohnett: She was born in Michigan, but they brought her to California as a baby and she grew up in Yuba City. She finished high school here and went through San Jose Normal. I met her when she was initiated into the Eastern Star in 1908.

Baum: Have you remained a Republican throughout your life?

Bohnett: Well, the machine men made so much fuss about our running the party that we formed the Progressive Party, and I registered as a Progressive until that party disappeared. It petered out along about the time of the First World War -- 1917 or '18, along in there. I registered as a Republican until 1933; I was registered as a Democrat before the 1934 election, I know.

Baum: So you were registered as a Republican when Roosevelt ran against Hoover.

Bohnett: Yes. But I think I voted for Norman Thomas, if my memory's right. [Laughter]

Bohnett: I liked President Hoover personally. He's a fine man. I never thought much of him as a statesman, and I think that his record in office showed it. I was afraid of Roosevelt, being a rich man out of New York, all those associations, and I thought that all his talk about the downtrodden -- I was afraid that that was all poppycock, just for getting votes. But I found that he meant it and I skipped over and I've registered Democratic ever since.

Baum: So you didn't continue to follow Johnson?

Bohnett: Oh, I voted for him all the way through, and worked for him. I don't think I've ever voted a straight ticket. [Laughter] To have an effective vote, to have any influence at all, you practically have to be registered as a Democrat now. This county now is Democratic. Of course, the one congressman from here is Republican, and the state senator too -- the Democrats don't have it all.

Baum: Some of the Progressives became Democrats and some of them returned to the Republican Party.

Bohnett: Well, I returned as far as registration goes, but that's about all.

Baum: Oh, you didn't vote, say, for Harding in 1920?

Bohnett: I voted for Roosevelt on the Progressive ticket in 1912. But I voted for Wilson in 1916. In all the time I was

Bohnett: registered as a Republican I voted for one Republican candidate for President: Taft in 1908. In 1924 I was county chairman of the campaign for LaFollette. We almost carried San Jose.

Brewer: That was a very dramatic campaign, don't you think?

Bohnett: Yes. I was one of the ones named for Presidential elector and then the state Supreme Court threw us out and we had to go to the Socialist electors, who agreed to take LaFollette. Of course that put the kibosh on the chances of carrying the state. In early September of that year I think LaFollette had an awfully good chance of carrying the state, but after the Supreme Court decision he didn't have it again.

Baum: You worked on the Santa Clara Water Conservation District, didn't you? What part did you play in that?

Bohnett: Well, a first committee formed to try to do something consulted me and I prepared a bill for the legislature, which was passed by the legislature and defeated in the election by less than 250 votes. Well, we wrote the bill again and brought it up and had another election and then it was overwhelmingly defeated.

Baum: It was defeated by people who didn't want to pay extra taxes?

Bohnett: They were the leaders -- Richmond, Wilbur Edwards, John ~~Crumme.~~ Crummey John Crummey's a friend of mine and I don't

Bohnett: hold any grievance, but later after the reservoirs were built he and I were talking one day, and he said, "You know, I told Paul" -- that's his son-in-law, Paul Davies -- "that there would never come a time when our well would go dry, but it did." Until his well went dry he was opposed to it. [Laughing] That was the attitude, that there was an abundant supply of water underground and they would be all right. If anybody else wanted water they could drill a well, too.

So Jones asked me, "Are you going to try again on this?" I said, "No, I'm going to wait until some of these wells that the fellows are so proud of go dry, and then try again." Jones said, "Well, have you any objection if I try?" I said, "Not at all."

He put in a bill, a very simple bill; it had no provision for bond issues or anything of that kind, but was general over the state while the ones I'd prepared were special, for this county. He got it through the legislature without any trouble, and when it finally was put to a vote here they adopted it. The big argument for it was that it was for purposes of investigation, research, and survey and there was no provision for a bond issue. At the next session they put in provisions for a bond issue and taxation. [Laughing] Herb's a good friend of mine,

Bohnett: we've always worked together, but that was one thing I never quite agreed with him on. I couldn't do it.

Baum: You thought it was a little too sly?

Bohnett: Yes, to get them to vote on the ground that there is no chance for a bond issue, just a nominal assessment for purposes of gathering data, and then as soon as they've accepted that to turn around and put in provisions for a bond issue. That's the one thing we disagree on.

Baum: Perhaps it's like your using the strong arm as floor leader.

Bohnett: Yes. But I had the votes; I knew that, I just didn't want to spend the time. However, the district is to the advantage of the county.

Baum: It certainly has proved effective.

Bohnett: Oh, yes, there's no question about it. It was a good thing, but the procedure was a little distasteful to me, that's all. I voted for it and went on the air for it, however.

Baum: Herbert Jones was elected in 1913, I think.

Bohnett: Nineteen-twelve; 1913 was his first session.

Baum: So his term overlapped yours.

Bohnett: Yes. I could have gone to the Senate at that time if I had wanted to, but I thought that I could be elected speaker of the Assembly and that would make me a Regent of the University, and I preferred that. But Frank Benson was

Ornett: We've really [illegible] [illegible] but I [illegible]
I never quite agreed with [illegible]. I consider [illegible]

Ann: I'm thought it was [illegible] to give.

Ornett: [illegible], to get them to vote on the general [illegible]
to choose for [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
for purposes of [illegible] [illegible], and then [illegible]
they've accepted [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
for a good [illegible]. That's the one thing [illegible]

Ann: Perhaps it's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
leader.

Ornett: Yes. [illegible] the voters [illegible]
to round the [illegible]. However, the [illegible]
advantage of the [illegible].

Ann: It certainly [illegible] [illegible].

Ornett: Yes, there's no question about [illegible]
but the procedure [illegible] [illegible]
all. I voted for it [illegible] [illegible]

Ann: Herbert Jones was [illegible] [illegible].

Ornett: Nineteen-twenty [illegible] [illegible].

Ann: So his term [illegible] [illegible].

Ornett: Yes. I could [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible], but I [illegible] [illegible]
of the [illegible]
University, and I [illegible] [illegible].

Bohnett: elected. Even before he announced his candidacy he asked me if I was going to be a candidate and said, "I'll be with you if you want to run."

Baum: This was for the Senate, in 1912?

Bohnett: Yes. But I don't regret it. I had my fun in the Assembly.

Baum: In 1915 were you defeated?

Bohnett: No, I didn't run. I ran for Congress in 1914. That was the time when E.A. Hayes was elected by a minority. There were eight counties, all the coast counties from the southern boundary of the city and county of San Francisco to the northern boundary of Los Angeles. Hayes beat me by 2,742 votes, I believe; the Prohibition candidate had something over 4,000. It was the only time Hayes was elected by a plurality rather than a majority. If I could have only convinced some of my friends that I had a chance I would have been elected, but I couldn't convince them. However, I think it was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

Baum: You decided not to go on in politics, then?

Bohnett: I decided I would never be a candidate for office again unless I had accumulated enough wealth to be entirely independent, to handle my own fight and not ask for contributions. And then I lost my desire to hold office after a while.

Bennett: elected. When before a convention did anybody be
asked me if I was going to be a candidate [illegible]
be with you if you [illegible] me.

Muir: This was for the Senate, is it?

Bennett: Yes. But I don't remember it. I had my fun in the
assembly.

Muir: In 1915 were you elected?

Bennett: No, I didn't run. I [illegible] suggested [illegible]
was the time when L.A. Dayer was elected [illegible]
There were eight [illegible] I couldn't [illegible]
the southern district of the [illegible] County.
Knowlson to the court - [illegible]
beat me by [illegible] votes, I believe; the [illegible]
date had something over [illegible]. It [illegible]
Dayer was elected by a [illegible] majority [illegible]
If I could have only convinced some [illegible]
I had a chance I would have been [illegible]
convince them. However, I think [illegible]
[illegible] that ever happened to me.

Muir: You decided not to go on [illegible]

Bennett: [illegible] decided I would [illegible]
unless I had to make a [illegible]
independent, to [illegible] own [illegible]
business. And then I'd [illegible] to [illegible]
a while.

Baum: You can never become that independent now, with the cost of campaigning.

Bohnett: No, no. I never asked anybody for a penny in contributions. T.M. Wright contributed $10 toward my congressional fight -- voluntarily.

Baum: You mean you made a congressional fight without contributions?

Bohnett: I never asked anybody for a penny in any fight I ever made, and nobody ever volunteered anything except that $10. But of course I didn't spend anything like the money they spend now.

Baum: When you're in politics I suppose that limits the chances of your making a decent living in private practice?

Bohnett: Yes, unless you capitalize on your office and solicit business on the strength of your politics. I don't want office under those circumstances; I never did.

Baum: Do you participate in local politics?

Bohnett: Just in talking to people and so on, going on the radio for them from time to time. But I haven't been on any big committees or anything of that kind. Let the younger people do it.

Take the congressional fight now -- eighty or a hundred thousand dollars for the campaign. Don Edwards, whom I supported and will continue to support, has made a lot of money in the ~~cattle~~ title business and he had money

Bohnett: of his own to spend and a lot of people contributed besides. Well, I wouldn't like that. I couldn't afford to run myself and I wouldn't like to accept contributions. I think it's a bad thing for the country. Ultimately we're going to find that we'll pay through the nose for it.

Baum: I think the only solution is for many people to make small contributions. It's the large contributions that made a person less independent.

Bohnett: Canute couldn't make the tide recede. [Laughter] I don't think anybody as an individual is going to change the pattern very much.

Brewer: I have one more question. Did you have any dealings with Alexander McCabe?

Bohnett: He was the personal secretary to Governor Johnson in the first term, I believe, before Madsen took over. I was much more friendly with Madsen than McCabe. McCabe was the typical San Francisco politician -- organization, booze, that under-world element. Not that he was in it, but he understood them, and he was more or less of a roughneck. Madsen was a more cultured type of man.

The first time I met Madsen he looked me over and said, "You're a pretty young man to have created all the hell you have." [Laughing] Those were his exact words.

Bonnett: of his own to spend and a lot of money to contribute
bondage. Well, I wouldn't like that. I could [illegible]
to run myself and I wouldn't like to spend [illegible]
I think it's a bad thing for the country. [illegible]
we're going to find that we'll [illegible]
it.

Bauer: I think the only [illegible] small contributions. It's the [illegible]
made a person [illegible] independent.

Bonnett: Cannon couldn't see the [illegible]. [illegible]
don't think anybody [illegible]
the pattern very much.

Brewer: I have one more question. Did you [illegible] with Alexander Botkin?

Bonnett: He was the personal secretary to [illegible]
first term, I believe, before [illegible]
much more friendly with [illegible] than [illegible]
the typical [illegible] -- [illegible]
house, that under-world element. [illegible]
let me understand [illegible] was more [illegible]
[illegible]. Hansen was [illegible]

The first time [illegible]
said, "You're a pretty young man [illegible]
hell you have." [illegible]

Baum: I see you were on the Education Committee, the Library Committee, and the Universities Committee.

Bohnett: And on the Ways and Means Committee, too, that first session.

Baum: Were you particularly interested in education?

Bohnett: No, but I was a new member, a rookie, not a member of the machine, and I got what was left over. Ways and Means was an important committee; I got that instead of the Judiciary Committee.

Baum: Did you get on the Judiciary Committee later?

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: You were a lawyer in 1909?

Bohnett: I was admitted to the bar in 1907. At the time I was deputy county clerk and I stayed with that until the president of the bank in Campbell died and his brother wanted me to handle the estate, and I resigned as deputy county clerk and opened a law office.

Baum: Did you read law while you were at the University or after?

Bohnett: I took all the law courses I could take as an undergraduate. I had contracts, crimes, torts; then I studied by myself, and as deputy county clerk of course I was connected with the courts and could see the practical side of it.

Brown: [illegible]

Johnson: [illegible]

Brown: [illegible]

Johnson: [illegible]

[illegible]

Dalton: [illegible]

Brown: [illegible]

Johnson: [illegible]

[illegible]

Johnson: [illegible]

Brewer: By 1911 you were on some tough committees, weren't you?

Bohnett: In 1911 I was chairman of the Reapportionment Committee. That was quite a fight.

Baum: Well, Mr. Bohnett, thank you very much.

Bohnett: You're very welcome.

Second interview with Mr. L.D. Bohnett,
November 18, 1964, San Jose.

Baum: We will have to continue our interview without Mrs. Brewer, who has returned to her teaching duties at Queen's College in New York, but she submitted a number of questions in writing and we can discuss those as well as other matters. Did you get the copy of the questions I sent by mail?

Bohnett: Yes, I've looked them over.

Baum: I'd like to go back a little to the period we covered in the first interview and pick up a few details before we go on to the 1924 LaFollette campaign. Did the national money troubles of 1892 affect your family?

Bohnett: I don't recall it much. Of course they cut prices of everything. Eggs were eight cents a dozen. I think around in the early '90's a man named J. W. Hunt started a bakery in Los Gatos and delivered bread all around the country there, and we could buy bread for six loaves for a quarter and he gave us a lot of candy at Christmastime besides. Things were very cheap. Some of the farmers cut their wages for their hired men to $1.25 for a ten hour day, $1.50 had been the regular price. They didn't all cut; we didn't cut.

Baum: You don't remember that as particularly hard times for your family.

Bohnett: Well, I was reading the papers by then, and the papers were full of the hard times, but all the times were hard times for us. We were just starting a new orchard. There was no income from the property. We were living on the proceeds of the sale of the property my father sold before he bought the property we lived on in 1892. We sold some eggs and butter, but that didn't mean much. So we weren't in a position to feel the impact of the hard times

Baum: Was the depression hard on San Jose, or did it miss this area somewhat?

Bohnett: I don't think it was as hard here. This was not an industrial town at that time. It was almost strictly agricultural. Of course, I was only twelve years old then...

Baum: You didn't have the burden your parents did.

Bohnett: No.

Baum: I was wondering about the time you attended the University of California. Did your parents help to support you there, or did you work your own way?

Bohnett: I kept a strict account of everything. I received a total of $1600 from home in the four years, but I worked all the summer and winter vacations at home without pay to make up part of that. And I had worked six years on the farm between grammar school and high school.

I notice on the list of questions you sent me you wanted to know what kind of work I did to help support myself. When I first started I got a job waiting on table at the faculty club--I just got my board for that--and I made a very poor waiter. One night they had a faculty dinner and I had a big tray of black coffee. I was carrying it on my hand and I was shaking so there was more coffee in the saucers than in the cups. Believe it or not, one of those cups turned upside down in the saucer, I was shaking so. (laughter). But I didn't do that long. I did some gardening.

But early in my freshman year Dr. Bancroft got me a position in the co-op store in the basement of North Hall. So all the time I had to work from that time until graduation, I worked there in the student co-op and earned a large part of my expenses that way. I started at 25 cents an hour and I believe got up to 40 cents an hour.

Baum: Was this as a clerk?

Bohnett: Yes, clerking.
Then I was on the Daily Californian and was editor my senior year, the first semester of my senior year, and I was supposed to be paid for that. The business manager and the editor were to divide the net profits of the paper, but the business manager collected the money, and all I saw of it, as I recall, was $70--he kept the rest. Then, after he was practicing law in Stockton, he dropped in on me and tried to borrow money from me. Needless to say, I didn't have any money to lend.

Baum: Getting on to your years in the legislature, I had a question about Jere Burke, the Southern Pacific lobbyist. What did he look like?

Bohnett: Well, he was a tall man, big frame, but not fat. I never saw him smile, but I suppose he did upon occasion. He was very severe looking, a long face rather than round. Of course I just have a very dim picture of him now, looking back. I never conversed with him, I just saw him, and that was just in the 1907 session when I was up in Sacramento as a committee clerk, not as a member. While I was a member he never showed up, he was never around the legislative chambers at all. If he were in Sacramento, he kept in his own office. But in 1907 he was right there in Redman's Hall where the sessions were being held and directing his subordinates openly.

Baum: Did he have the manner of a political boss?

Bohnett: Well, I always pictured a boss as a rather affable person, and I would say he was not affable, but of course, he was just the agent of the boss, W. F. Herrin. Herrin was the boss, but I don't remember ever seeing him except in pictures. Burke was his legislative agent.

Baum: Do you remember any utility lobbyists?

Bohnett: No. I doubt if they were very plentiful. I think the big boss, through Burke, handled that for them, but I can't say that positively.

Baum: What kind of pressure would the Southern Pacific use on the legislators? Would it be bribery, or some more subtle means?

Bohnett: I don't think they had to use bribery. The machine was working all over the state. Unless you were going to line up with them, you didn't get the nomination.

Baum: As far as you know there wasn't any out and out bribery.

Bohnett: Not that I was aware of. I know that I was never offered a bribe. I think I mentioned to you the other time that this man Kuck introduced a cigarette bill and in connection with that a friend of mine in the advertising business in San Francisco came up. He talked to me and he didn't come out and offer a bribe, but he did say to me, "L.D., don't be a damn fool all your life." Of course, I took that to mean that if I wanted a piece of money I could have had it. That was the only time that anything was ever said to me that indicated that money was available if I wanted it.

Baum: Was labor particularly strong at that time as a lobbying force?

Bohnett: Yes, labor was quite strong, not as strong as it became later. I remember Hiram Johnson saying that of all the organizations, all the political groups, labor was the only one that stayed with you if you did them a favor. The other organizations forgot it as soon as they got a favor.

Baum: Were labor lobbyists working there in Sacramento, talking to you about bills and so on?

Bohnett: Oh yes. I remember particularly, labor was very strong

Bohnett: in favor of the anti-Japanese bills, bills to curtail the activities of the Japanese. In the 1911 session they had an anti-injunction bill, a bill to prevent the issuance of court injunctions in labor disputes. I remember those two particularly, but they had other bills too. They had one on featherbedding on the railroads, just like in this 1964 election, so that's been going a long time. That is, they had a bill in to require a certain minimum crew.

Yes, labor was quite active.

Baum: They were quite active in Sacramento. Were they a strong force in getting legislators elected?

Bohnett: Yes. Here in San Jose they were quite strong. In the rest of the county they didn't have much effect, in the agricultural areas.

Baum: Would getting labor's endorsement be quite an advantage in San Jose?

Bohnett: It could help in San Jose, and it could hurt. Well, in 1908, my first year, there were three assemblymen from this county. Everything north of Santa Clara Street was in one district, everything south of Santa Clara Street was in another district. Dan Hayes and Robert Telfer were elected and they were strictly labor candidates. The town vote outnumbered the country vote. I didn't have any part of San Jose.

Baum: Were you endorsed by labor or didn't they pay any attention to you?

Bohnett: They didn't pay any attention. Their candidate in my district had been a member of the Assembly in 1905 and he was a candidate again for the nomination in 1908, for the 1909 session, and I beat him out in the county convention, which was the last county convention.

Baum: So you were the anti-labor candidate?

Bohnett: It wasn't an issue.

Baum: Would a labor endorsement have hurt you in your district?

Bohnett: I doubt it.

Baum: Farmers are pretty suspicious of labor unions.

Bohnett: That's true. Labor got sore at me right at the end of the 1911 session and they would have liked to have sent somebody else in the 1913 session, but I was pretty well entrenched by that time so they didn't make an open fight. But thereafter I was friendly to labor.

It was over that anti-injunction bill that they got sore because I didn't support it.

Baum: And they would remember and carry through? If you didn't support a bill, at the next election they would try to strike you down, is that right?

Bohnett: Oh yes. For instance, I guess it was the 1909 session when the anti-Japanese bills were up. There were four bills there and I voted against all of them. So in the 1910 campaign for the 1911 session--they had an anti-Japanese organization here, I've forgotten the name of it, and they held a session for all the candidates to be heard, and I was late. I didn't get in until all the other candidates had spoken. They were just adjourning when I entered the hall. The chairman recognized me and he called me up. I had copies of each of these four bills and I briefly explained each one and I said, "And I voted against all four of them. If I am elected and they come up before me again, I will do the same thing." And then I explained the reasons why.

Baum: Most of the Progressives voted for those anti-Japanese bills, didn't they?

Bohnett: No. They even had William Jennings Bryan come out and address the legislature in opposition to them, explaining that they might cause trouble with Japan. They would object to them on a foreign policy basis.

I explained my stand and I got a good hand. I thought they would cause foreign trouble, and they didn't accomplish anything. I got a good round of applause at this anti-Japanese group. As they left the hall, Jim Rea who had been a political boss here for years--he was running for state senator at the time--he and another candidate were standing at the door and they both stuck out their hands and congratulated me. Rea said, "You're the only one among all of us who had the guts to stand up and tell them what you thought. I didn't intend to vote for you, but I'm going to vote for you now."

So it sometimes pays to tell the truth, even as a politician.

Baum: How strong a force were the Drys?

Bohnett: They were quite strong. I had supported a local option bill and so on. There was no question, the liquor interests were against me.

Baum: So you were a Dry?

Bohnett: Yes. That is, I'm not claiming to be a teetotaler, but I never got drunk, and politically I was a Dry. I would take a glass of beer with a meal or a social drink, but I was on the Dry side.

Baum: Did you feel, as many of the Drys did, that if you could do away with liquor you could solve many of the problems of society?

Bohnett: I never figured it was a panacea for all our troubles, but I thought it would concentrate the thought of the people on more important issues, that liquor was a troublemaker and we'd be better off without it.

Baum: Weren't there a lot of Italians down here, and vineyards?

Bohnett: Oh yes. Of course, a lot of them didn't vote at that time. I think the records will show that a big influx of Italians came in the late '80's and '90's and the early part of this century. They were imported here as cheap labor. A great many of them never learned to read or write and the big majority of them never bothered to become naturalized and their children weren't old enough to vote as yet. Still, there was a considerable Italian vote, and of course that was not Dry.

I think I told you in the other interview about drinking some bad wine with the king of Goose-Town. That was in the Italian area. I didn't carry that area, but I made a very close run in it, and it was expected to go three or four to one against me.

Baum: Mrs. Brewer asked about Daniel M. Gandier.

Bohnett: He was head of the Anti-Saloon League, I forget whether of the state or of Northern California. He was the paid leader for this area. A very fine man, tall, gaunt. He had a good head; he was reasonable. He didn't have any objection to a man taking a social drink, he was against drunkeness and the commercialized business--commercialized vice as he called it.

Baum: Would he be of any assistance to you in elections?

Bohnett: Yes. Well, I don't know that he helped any in the three times I was elected to the Assembly. He did work for me in the campaign for Congress in which I was defeated. You see, the Republican nomination for

Bohnett: the Assembly at that time was tantamount to election. Then in 1912 when we went over bodily to the Progressive Party, the Progressive nomination was the same, so except for 1910 I never really had to make a fight for the Assembly. In 1910, the first year of the direct primary, I had to make an individual fight and the politicians didn't think I had a chance, but I got in with a comfortable majority. So Gandier didn't have to help me.

Baum: What could Gandier have done for people who needed help? What kind of an organization did he have?

Bohnett: I think he sent out some mailing. They had precinct workers and so on.

Baum: Were these mainly temperance ladies?

Bohnett: Yes. And he would have preachers talk from the pulpit.

Baum: And that would be an advantage to be supported by the ministry?

Bohnett: At that time yes. The Drys had a majority in this area.

Baum: When you were in the Assembly, where did you stay in Sacramento?

Bohnett: My first session I stayed in private boarding houses. The second session I was married and we stayed at the Land Hotel. In 1913 I think we stayed at the Sacramento. (Mr. Bohnett consults the Handbook of the California Legislature. He has copies for the 1909, 1911, and 1913 sessions of the Legislature) These little books contain a lot of information, including where the legislators stayed. This says I stayed at the Regis; I would have thought it was the Sacramento.

Baum: I was wondering if where a man stayed had anything to do with his legislative work, if men who lived at one hotel maybe got together more or something like that.

Bohnett: No, I wouldn't say so. The Land Hotel and the Sacramento were right together there. The Regis was there too. Of course, the Senator Hotel was built between the 1911 and the 1913 sessions and it was in the same area too.

Baum: It might have been a disadvantage to have rented a house and lived farther out.

Bohnett: Yes, unless you didn't want to work nights, but I always had committee work or something.

Baum: I'd like to ask some questions about Francis Heney. Mrs. Brewer is writing a book about Heney and she was interested in how much influence he had around San Jose.

Bohnett: I don't recall that he was particularly strong here. I don't recall what vote he got here when he ran for the Senate.

Baum: Among the voters, was he a popular hero figure from his work in the San Francisco graft trials?

Bohnett: I'm trying to put my finger on what people had against him around here. Of course, this is an agricultural community and he was a big city man so he had that to overcome. As I recall it, there was some lack of confidence in him here, but what it was and how strong I don't recall. He never became the hero here that Hiram Johnson did; there was no comparison between the following of the two men.

Baum: Among the Chester Rowell papers in Bancroft Library there is a letter from you written to Rowell, apparently in response to a letter from Rowell to you asking for your support for the Senatorial nomination. Rowell and Heney were running against each other. And you told Rowell you would support him for the nomination, but that you thought Heney might run stronger in this area because he was closer to San Jose than Rowell.

Bohnett: If I said that, that is what I believed because I was a friend of Rowell's and I wouldn't have tried to mislead him in any way. I did write such a letter?

Baum: Yes, it's there, signed L.D. Bohnett. In that same letter, 1913, you said you were working on the Red Light Abatement bill.

Bohnett: In 1913 I was a candidate for speaker of the Assembly and I explained that in the previous interview. The W.C.T.U. had asked me to introduce the Red Light Abatement bill and they gave me a copy of the Iowa law, I believe it was. I took that to our district attorney, Clarence Coolidge was deputy district attorney, and I took it to him to revise to meet California conditions. I told the W.C.T.U. that I was a candidate for speaker and that if I won I wouldn't be introducing the bill, but that if I did not win I would introduce it for them. That was bad politics, of course, because I couldn't get their support for speaker--I don't think that really entered in. So I played kingmaker and made C.C. Young speaker and didn't get it myself. So I introduced the bill and we got it through the legislature and then it was held up by a referendum petition.

We had a lot of meetings and I spoke all over central California for the Red Light Abatement act, the so-called Blue Sky law which was also held up by referendum, the Water Commission act which was held up on referendum, and a fourth one. That's about all the speaking I did. My campaign for Congress was mostly by mail. I went around and met people, but not much.

Baum: The Red Light Abatement act was a popular bill, wasn't it?

Bohnett: It just depends. The city votes were against it, and for the first day or so while they were counting the vote the papers said it was badly beaten, but it finally won when the rural vote came in.

Baum: In your letter you commented that Johnson didn't think it would pass in the referendum.

Bohnett: No, Johnson was surprised.

Baum: In one of your letters in the Rowell papers, you asked Rowell for his support in your Congressional race. You asked him to write an editorial in his paper and you intended to mail copies of the editorial to Progressive

Baum: voters in your district, if he would write it. I don't think he wrote the editorial.

Bohnett: No. I don't blame him. He was not in my district, he was over in the Central Valley and my district was along the coast. I don't think I urged him very strongly.

Baum: No, you said in the letter you would understand if he couldn't write the editorial, but you would have liked to put a copy of such an editorial in letters to voters.

Bohnett: I would have. Rowell and the Fresno Republican were very popular among the Progressives and I could have used it to advantage.

Baum: Yes. You didn't lose that election by very much.

Bohnett: There were about 75,000 votes and I lost by less than 2750 votes. That was the only time E.A. Hayes won by a plurality instead of a majority.

Baum: Yes. I think Hayes got a little less than 49%, you got more than 45%, and the Prohibition candidate got the few votes in between.

Bohnett: Yes, if Hiram Johnson had given me a little boost when he spoke here I could have won. If I could have convinced my Progressive friends that I had a chance, I would have won, but I'm glad that I didn't.

Baum: Had you asked Hiram Johnson to say a word for you?

Bohnett: No. I never asked anybody for help. Johnson was a candidate for reelection; he knew I was a candidate. If he wanted to help me he could, but there was no reason why he should endanger his own campaign.

In the LaFollette campaign ten years later I called Johnson by phone to make an appointment to meet him in his law office on a certain afternoon. I had to wait for him and when he came he said he had just been eating lunch with C.C. Young who was then lieutenant-governor

Bohnett: and Irving Martin of the Stockton Record and he said, "I told them I had an appointment to meet you and they said you were going to try to induce me to come out for LaFollette." Then he explained why he couldn't. That's what I did go up for.

Baum: And why couldn't he?

Bohnett: Well, he said he didn't think it was cricket. LaFollette had been a candidate in the primary and having been so, Johnson didn't think it was cricket for LaFollette to come out against the winner, the nominee of the party.

Baum: Was he against splitting the party at that point?

Bohnett: Well, he had been the leader of one split. However, he may not have wanted any more of it, and he may have been convinced by that time that LaFollette didn't have a chance. I don't know.

Baum: You mentioned that in 1912 he was very favorable to LaFollette. Did he continue to feel that way?

Bohnett: I don't know. 1912 was the time he read us the two letters from LaFollette and Theodore Roosevelt. That time and the time I tried to persuade him to come out for LaFollette in 1924 were the only two times I recall having discussed LaFollette with him.

Baum: What was your job in the 1924 campaign?

Bohnett: I was chairman of the Santa Clara County LaFollette committee. I had been named as one of the presidential electors on his ticket. Of course there was no organized party and the only way we could get on the ballot was by petition. We had the petitions all ready to file and then the question was raised as to whether the direct primary law included presidential electors. It was taken directly to the State Supreme Court for a writ of mandate to require

Bohnett: the county clerk of Marin County to file the petition. The State Supreme Court held by a vote of 4-3 that the direct primary did not apply to presidential electors and that this could not get on the ballot by petition. Three justices, Emmet Seawell, Thomas J. Lennon, and William P. Lawlor, all dissented. That was the case of Rudolph ~~Spreckles~~ Spreckels et al, petitioners, against Robert E. Graham, county clerk of Marin County, in 194 California Reports 516. That decision was in September 1924.

As the only way to get on the ballot--I had nothing to do with this--the state committee made arrangements with the Socialist Party that they pledge their electors to vote for LaFollette. So we had to make the campaign in this state to elect the Socialist electors, which of course killed all our chances.

In September LaFollette was very strong in this county. It was my personal view then, and still is, that if the electors had gone on the ballot as planned, we would have carried this county for LaFollette. We came fairly close; I don't recall what the figures were, but we made a very good showing for him in this county. After this court decision, our strength throughout the state decreased visibly.

Comments: [illegible]

Baum: What kind of preliminary work had gone on? It sounds like you had quite an organization already.

Bohnett: The Progressive movement was still pretty strong. Coolidge didn't appeal to a lot of us. But we couldn't get the office holders who had been strong Progressive leaders. I told you I tried to get Johnson personally; I couldn't get him. We couldn't get C.C. Young or Irving Martin. I don't remember what Chester Rowell's attitude was in that campaign.

Baum: You wanted to run LaFollette as a Progressive with all the old Progressive support.

Bohnett: He was a Progressive, but our electors would have gone on as independents because we had no organized party here at the time. Then the Supreme Court decision dropped us from the ballot entirely, but the Socialists already had their presidential electors nominated and they had a right to go on the ballot so they agreed to support LaFollette. I don't know if LaFollette would have won with independent electors, but he would have gotten a lot more votes.

Baum: Probably the Democratic candidate, John W. Davis, would have won. (laughter)

Had the organization of LaFollette supporters gone on mainly within the Republican Party, among the Republican who had been Progressives?

Bohnett: Yes. And there was very strong support for him in the beginning. In September the powers-that-be in the Republican and Democratic parties were very much scared.

Baum: Was Rudolph ~~Spreckles~~ Spreckels the main sparkplug for the LaFollette campaign?

Bohnett: He was very active in it, and I guess he put up a lot of the money.

Baum: Where did the money come from? There wasn't much, was there?

Bohnett: I know we had difficulty raising the money here for the local campaign, but we just raised it from Tom, Dick, and Harry who were willing to put up $25 or $50. Then we used literature sent out by the state and national organizations. I don't know where the bulk of the money for the state campaign came from. I always thought that ~~Spreckles~~ Spreckels put up a good deal.

Men like Franklin Hichborn were strong for LaFollette. Franck Havenner was very active, a lot of Progressives who had been up near the top.

Baum: Were you able to get favorable publicity from the local newspapers?

Bohnett: Some, yes, but of course the editorial policy of the papers was against us.

Baum: Did you have speakers who would go out and speak?

Bohnett: Some. We had meetings. We couldn't get the enthusiasm after the court decision.

Baum: Do you remember who some of the leaders were in the county?

Bohnett: No, I can't now. The man I relied on when I had to be out of town during the campaign was Dwight Needham. He worked like a warhorse on it. There were a number of others who got right out and worked.

Baum: Had you ever met LaFollette?

Bohnett: He spoke here in San Jose, when it was I don't remember but not in 1924. It was held in a building over on the corner of Market and San Antonio Street, torn down long ago, and I don't know who was in charge here but they didn't even have a chairman for him. They had to pick up a chairman out of the meeting to introduce him. I heard him speak and I probably shook hands with him, but I don't recall.

Baum: I wondered if you had personal contact with him.

Bohnett: No.

Baum: Did you have direct contact with his headquarters in Wisconsin?

Bohnett: Only through my connection with the campaign committee here. I assume I had some direct communications, I don't recall any.

Baum: Mrs. Brewer has pointed out that there is very little material on the California campaign and she wondered why.

Bohnett: That was forty years ago, and I have no records of the campaign. I just don't remember.

Baum: Did ~~Spreckles~~ Spreckels have much to do with the campaign down here?

Bohnett: We had him come down and speak here. I presided at that meeting, and alienated some very good friends by doing so because they were rock-ribbed Republicans. In the introductory remarks I stated that one of the things I personally hoped to see come about was a breakdown between the old parties and get a new alignment along natural divisions of thought, between the conservatives and the progressives. That shocked old party people terribly.

I don't recall whether ~~Spreckles~~ Spreckels appeared more than that once in this county. His name was used, of course. I have no doubt at all that he spoke in other places in the state. But it wasn't a close-knit organization. It didn't start until after the Republican convention had nominated Coolidge, and you don't throw these campaigns together in such a hurry.

In 1912 Teddy Roosevelt had a much better chance to form an organization. He'd been governor of New York, he'd been President of the United States; Johnson as the vice-presidential candidate, was governor of California. Even that wasn't too well organized in 1912.

Baum: Apparently some former Progressives came out against LaFollette, and among those was Chester Rowell. Those who came out for LaFollette included Heney and Fremont Older. Do you recall that?

Bohnett: No. You asked about that in the questions you mailed me, but I don't recall now.

Baum: Do you feel that supporting LaFollette damaged you politically?

Bohnett: I had no political ambitions. I had no idea of ever running for office again so I felt perfectly free. It would unquestionably have hurt me if I had been running for politics. For instance, during that campaign I had occasion to go up to Berkeley and I stopped at the fraternity house, the ~~Abacadabera~~ Abracadabra House, where Bob Sproul and I were both members and picked him up. He was controller of the University then. I drove him over to campus and when he got out of the car and saw the LaFollette stickers on the car, he said he didn't know if he could ride in that car or not. But he did. (laughter)

Baum: Well, Sproul was always a pretty regular Republican, wasn't he?

Bohnett: Yes.

Baum: Do you think it damaged your law practice in any way?

Bohnett: No, I don't think so. I don't think I lost any clients by it; they figured I had a right to my own political views. But I might have picked up other clients. For instance, Mr. Chace, an insurance agent here--his

Bohnett: son Darrell Chace later became postmaster here and a very active Republican--the senior Chace wanted to take me up to the home of the chief attorney for the Southern Pacific, Paul Shoup. There was a fight on here over the rerouting of the Southern Pacific lines through San Jose. I was on the Willow Glen side, but it happened to be the Southern Pacific side too. They wanted to get the tracks off of Fourth Street and put them on the west side. It was later compromised and everyone agreed on it. But while the fight was on Chace wanted me to go up there. But when he suggested to Shoup that he'd like to have him meet me, Shoup said, "Well, he's radical, isn't he? Didn't he handle the LaFollette campaign? Do you think we ought to have anything to do with him?"

And Chace said, "And he almost carried San Jose for LaFollette. He'd be a good man to help us." But I never met Shoup. That indicated that it might have interfered with me getting other clients.

But I'd never give up my right to independent thinking for the sake of clients.

Baum: Do you think it damaged Heney's or Older's political reputations to have supported LaFollette?

Bohnett: I doubt it.

Baum: Are there any other impressions you recall from that campaign?

Bohnett: I can't give you the actual vote but you can get that from the Secretary of State's office, county by county.

I can give you the general feeling here. I know when I called different Progressives to get to use their names on the committee, in August and September I had no difficulty, and we used their names throughout the campaign. It was a very popular move then. But you could just see the vote slipping away with that name of Socialist.

Baum: Well, we're out of time again, Mr. Bohnett. I want to thank you for these two interviews.

(End of interview, November 18, 1964)

Partial Index

L. D. BOHNETT
HENRY G. HILL (1884-1962)
JOHN B. BOHNETT
WILLIAM S. SMEED
RAYMOND L. GIRARD

BOHNETT, BOHNETT, SMEED & GIRARD
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW
1114 BANK OF AMERICA BUILDING
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95113

AREA CODE 408
TELEPHONE 292-0844

April 26, 1968

Mrs. Willa Baum, Head
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486, Library
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Mrs. Baum:

By now you have probably reached the definite conclusion that I am a confirmed liar, but when you phoned a few weeks ago and I told you that I would read the transcript of the interview which you took quite a while ago I fully intended to read the transcript during the next weekend or the one thereafter and report to you, but matters developed that made it impossible to keep my promise to you. At long last however, I have read the transcript and return it herewith together with a list of corrections which you can have made if you desire before filing.

I am not at all proud of this document and it still seems to me to deal too much with my personal activities rather than a treatise on the growth of the Progressive Movement. However, it is possible that a good way to show the development of a movement is to have a series of the personal experiences of some of the participants in such movement. At any rate you are at liberty to do as you see fit with the enclosed document after correction thereof.

You have been very patient with me in this matter and I regret and apologize for my unjustifiable delay, but you can now close the incident with the thought that "I am glad that stubborn old fool is out of my hair".

I want you to know that I appreciate your efforts in this matter and congratulate you upon the accuracy of the transcript, and I sincerely hope the others you have interviewed have not caused you the trouble I have.

With kindest regards, I am,

Very truly yours,

L. D. Bohnett

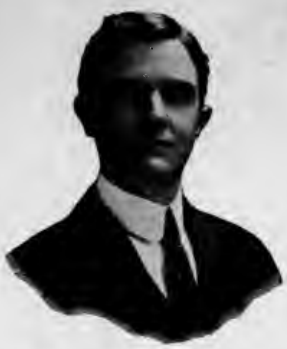
LDB:bb

P.S. Enclosed also are the 5 copies of agreement you forwarded each o which I have signed. I assume that one copy will be returned to me after it has been signed by the Regent's Representative.

L.D.B.

COUNTY	BOHNETT	HAYES	HORTON
San Mateo	3242	4930	279
Santa Clara	12406	14679	1118
Santa Cruz	3607	4059	718
San Benito	1295	1300	121
Monterey	3627	3557	443
San Luis Obispo	2987	2460	434
Santa Barbara	3847	3260	602
Ventura	2695	2454	442
TOTAL	33706	36499	4157

Total vote,	74408	Hayes,	49 %
Hayes' plurality,	2793	Bohnett,	45.3%
Majority against Hayes,	1361	Horton,	5.7%



PRECINCT.....

Party Affiliation.....

I WANT TO JOIN THE

BOHNETT CONGRESSIONAL CLUB

OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

and hereby pledge my support to L. D. BOHNETT for Member of Congress.

Name.....

Address.....

Return or mail to 314 Bank of San Jose Bldg., San Jose, Cal.

11

L. D. BOHNETT

For

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Born near San Jose, 1880

Graduate of University of California

Lawyer

Member of Assembly three terms 1909, 1911, 1913

An Experienced and Effective Legislator

ELECT HIM

10

L. D. BOHNETT

CANDIDATE FOR

Member of Congress

Eighth District

Primary Election, Aug. 25, '14

11

Protect the American Flag!

Every member of the G. A. R. and kindred patriotic orders should be reminded at this time of the resolution adopted May 8, 1914, by the 27th Annual Encampment of the Department of California and Nevada G. A. R., concerning a proposed change in the flag of the United States.

The resolution adopted follows:—

"RESOLUTION NO. 20.

WHEREAS, It is reported in the Public Press that an effort is being made to disfigure and deface the American Flag, —the flag for which we fought, by changing the grouping of the stars and adding the Confederate bars; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By this, the Forty-seventh Annual Encampment of the Department of California and Nevada, G. A. R., that WE ARE UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO THIS OR ANY OTHER CHANGE OF THE FLAG that was established by Washington and Jefferson and maintained by Lincoln and Grant, and whose very form has won its way into the admiration of the people of the world, and into the affections of every true American; and, be it further

RESOLVED, THAT WE CONDEMN THE MAN WHO INTRODUCED SAID MEASURE IN CONGRESS AND WILL OPPOSE ANY MAN OR PARTY WHO WILL FAVOR SUCH ACTION".

The measure referred to in the above resolution was introduced by congressman E. A. HAYES of the Eighth District of California, and reads as follows:

63d Congress, 1st Session. H. Con. Res. 6.

In the House of Representatives.
April 22, 1913.

MR. HAYES submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary and ordered to be printed.

.... .. CONCURRENT RESOLUTION.

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That the flag of the United States of America shall hereafter be as described: It shall consist of thirteen alternating stripes of red and white, with a field of blue in which shall be stars to the extent of forty-eight, arranged in a circle, to symbolize our Federal Union, which said circle shall be increased one star upon the admission of any other State. Within said circle of forty-eight stars shall be one large five-pointed star, constructed of smaller stars, which shall symbolize and represent our unparalleled Nation, the great Republic of the world. In the center of said star so constructed of smaller stars as above described shall be a red circle, which shall represent our colonial and insular possessions".

Will the patriotic men and women of the Eighth District vote for the re-election of Mr. Hayes?

CLASS OF '06 got together for their annual Big Game Luncheon at the Durant Hotel in Berkeley, November 17, 1967. Those present to cheer the Bears to victory were: (Standing, left to right) Louis Bohnett, Ivan Rankin, Bill Kelly, class president; (Seated, left to right) Harold Sharp, Sam Chase, and Dan Hadsell.

California Monthly
April-May / 1968

Willa Klug Baum

Grew up in Middle West and Southern California.
B.A., Whittier College, in American history and philosophy; teaching assistant in American history and constitution.
Newspaper reporter.
M.A., Mills College, in American history and political science; teaching fellow in humanities.
Graduate work, University of California at Berkeley, 1949-1954, in American and California history; teaching assistant in American history and recent United States history.
Adult school teacher, Oakland, in English and Americanization, 1948-1967; author of teaching materials for English.
Summer session instructor in English for foreign students, Speech Department, University of California at Berkeley.
Interviewer and then head of Regional Oral History Office, 1954 to present, specializing in water and agricultural history.
Council member of national Oral History Association, 1967-1969.