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Berkeley, California

Women in Politics Oral History Project

Julia Gorman Porter

DEDICATED DEMOCRAT AND CITY PLANNER, 1941-1975

With an Introduction by
Kevin Starr

An Interview Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris

Copy No. 1

September 15, 1990

Julia Gorman Porter

Julia Gorman Porter, a well-known Democratic Party leader and longtime member of the San Francisco Planning Commission, died August 22 at the age of 93.

Mrs. Porter, who was born in San Francisco, had been active in Democratic Party affairs beginning in the 1930s and worked to elect President Franklin Roosevelt. She became prominent in civ-

ic policy-making when she was appointed to the Planning Commission in 1943 by Mayor Roger Lapham. She continued as a member of the commission until the mid-1970s, when she retired.

She was a significant figure in the development of San Francisco's policies toward growth, as a fighter for height limits on waterfront buildings and as a critic of public-housing design, which she called inhumane. She was also a founding member of SPUR, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association.

Mrs. Porter was named to the federal Women's Prison Board by President Harry Truman. She also served as a president of the League of Women Voters, was Northern California chairwoman of the United Negro College Fund and president of the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

She was married to Dr. Charles B. Porter, a dentist who died in 1949. The couple had no children.

No services will be held for Mrs. Porter. Donations have been recommended for The Heritage, a retirement community at 3400 Laguna Street, San Francisco 94123, on whose board she served.



Julia Gorman Porter
March 1976

At Phoebe Apperson Hearst Awards luncheon.

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PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series of tape-recorded memoirs in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History project. This is the second phase of the Women in Politics project, the first of which dealt with the experiences of eleven women who had been leaders or rank-and-file workers in the suffrage movement.

This series of interviews has been designed to study the political activities of a selected group of prominent California women who became active in politics during the years between the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and the current feminist movement--roughly the years between 1920 and 1960. The women are Republicans, Democrats, independents, and members of splinter parties. A few aspired to public office and were defeated; a few have been elected or appointed; others have worked as political leaders in local offices, convention halls, and along the campaign trails to help elect their candidates to important political positions.

While the experiences of each woman are, of course, unique, as a whole these first-hand observations provide primary source material into the varying backgrounds, attitudes, and insights of women who achieved political prominence in an era when politics, at least at the higher levels, was considered the sole province of men. In addition they provide scholars with valuable historical information on details of party organization and the men and women who served in the party structures at the county, state, and national levels, the processes of selecting party leaders, raising funds, and drafting platforms, and the more subtle aspects of political life such as maintaining harmony, coping with jealousies, geographical dissensions, and fatigue, and the pleasures of friendships, triumphs, and struggles in a common cause.

The California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project has been financed by donations from individuals interested in this project, from friends and colleagues of individual memoirists, and by a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the history of the West and the nation. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library.

Malca Chall, Director
Women in Politics Oral History Project

1 January 1976
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

INTRODUCTION*

I have deep affection and respect for Julia Porter, Mrs. Charles Porter. She has been active in politics since the 1930s and has held a number of important positions, a remarkable continuity in San Francisco government.

Mrs. Porter was on the Planning Commission in the early 1940s, which was and still is now, one of the most important commissions; on the state Democratic Central Committee; she was with Eleanor Roosevelt when she visited California; she was very involved with the Kennedy campaign in 1960 -- that was her last big thing on the national level. Can you imagine anyone surviving mayors from Lapham to Christopher to Shelley to Alioto?

We became acquainted because I used to watch her in action on the Planning Commission. My job would take me over to City Hall for things that needed approval by the Commission and I felt I was in the presence of an extraordinarily intelligent woman. I went up and introduced myself; later she invited my wife and myself to her home for dinner. I have become very fond of her; our friendship is touched with a kind of poetization, a fine range of feeling that is quasi-romantic. She is capable of a lot of sentiment. You feel it when you go to her flat. There's a mood of that period just after World War I with its emphasis on Oriental furniture -- lovely -- and even a touch of the city before the earthquake, when she lights a coal fire on a foggy evening. Something of those years comes into the friendship. It is rare that one has a chance to have a relationship like that with a woman of her age.

Julia Porter is a very fine-looking woman now -- forty years ago she was superb, a handsome woman. If a woman was very good-looking in those days, I suspect that gave her a kind of authority, it was a head start in anything. She still is today a grande dame. Mrs. Porter has never been a rich woman -- she's never been poor, but she's not overwhelmingly rich, either. She gets a kick out of the fact that people think she's a wealthy woman, because she has an atmosphere of such elegance. It's the caste of intellect and accomplishment rather than wealth.

*From a background discussion with historian Kevin Starr in preparation for interviewing Julia Gorman Porter, recorded in September, 1975, while he was San Francisco City Librarian and a close observer of the city's political life.

She belongs to that genre of women which holds the best kind of political power, which is the appointive kind, serving on commissions rather than elected themselves. Her husband was a number of years older than she and early in their marriage encouraged her to get into politics. She knows all the personal relationships that are so important in a city like San Francisco: who hates who, who carries a grudge because of an old argument, that sort of thing.

I would say that Julia Porter's motivation is a fierce pride in San Francisco and in her place in it. A very strong sense of herself as a protagonist, as being among the people who've been the makers and shakers of the public side of the city. She has a sense of continuity, almost a psychological unity with that remarkable generation of turn-of-the-century women who were such a strong influence. Most of them weren't in politics; they tended to be more in the arts and journalism: Isabelle Frazier, Mikel Mikelson, Adela Rogers St. John, Kathleen Norris. Then she knew through her brother-in-law, Bruce Porter, the men who put together the early Burnham Plan for public works and parks throughout the city, and Porter Garnet and Lejeune and Gelett Burgess and the Peixottos, the group that put out that marvelous journal, The Lark.

These are the people who shaped and gave us the great city of the early years of this century. Bill Malone, who was the power of the Democratic party until about 1955 was her mentor, too.

Rather than ideological political motivations, I think Julia Porter has a sense of caste and responsibility, from which the best things are done. Political scientists tend to think that people act out of abstractions; very few people do. Most people act out of pride, lust, greed, anger, fear, compassion, generosity. It is only in retrospect, as we look back on history, that we can see the grand drama of ideas. Although she has the theoretical grasp of the big political design, I would say that she operates out of a more diffuse delight in people and events, which is politics as an art rather than a science.

She is from that era in San Francisco when you could get hold of five or six or eight people and put them in one room and say to yourself, these are the people who run the city. That doesn't happen any more, because it doesn't exist; there's no room for it today, but I think Mrs. Porter understands the committees and coalitions that have replaced it.

There is nobody today like Julia Porter; nobody of her longevity and continuity. There are women who get involved in politics on a social basis, but they don't stay with it. Public life has been her abiding interest since the 1940s. A whole generation of people have learned from her: Supervisor Ron Pelosi, who served with her on the Planning Commission; Allan Jacobs, who used to be Planning Director and is now at UC; people like that.

If she were in her thirties or forties today, she'd be running for office. I think she'd agree that what women need to do now is run. How come, out of all the intelligent women we have in San Francisco, so few run for office? Perhaps the elective route wasn't available to women years ago, at least in their minds it wasn't, aside from someone like Jeanette Rankin who did get to Congress. It's started now.

As with ethnic minority politicians, we are at a point where women politicians are responsible for everyone. People don't want to hear that candidates were repressed and now they're liberated; they want to know what a candidate is going to do about housing? What about traffic? Women sell themselves short when they see everything in symbolic terms. When they get elected, it should be because they're the best people to run the show. I think the first woman president will be more like Ella Grasso than Gloria Steinem.

I'm not knocking any internal mystique in terms of being a woman, what I'm saying is that the final effect has to be good politics. With Julia Porter, her femininity and her political skill are very much together and probably have been for a long time. Which is not to say that she has not had the normal pleasure and pain out of her gender, as we all do. Sometimes more pleasure than pain, and vice versa.

When you get a woman like Mrs. Porter, who will stay with one thing for years, give it the time, the hard work and thought, the personal touch of entertaining in her home, you've really got something in an appointive person. The power runs with those volunteers, because no power resides in civil service, none whatsoever. I believe in lay boards; at the top of everything should be a lay group that integrates the purpose of that institution into the total society. Only a lay group can do that, because only the lay mind at its best struggles for wholeness and integration. The professional mind is looking for fragmented truths.

It is most appropriate that The Bancroft Library has selected Julia Porter as a memorist in its study of California Political Leaders. Her story is a fine example of a person dedicated to public affairs and deeply civilized.

Kevin Starr
Historian

January, 1977
San Francisco

INTERVIEW HISTORY

In the introduction to this memoir by Julia Gorman Porter, Kevin Starr comments on the pride in San Francisco, the sense of belonging, and the understanding of people that motivate Mrs. Porter and others who hold what he sees as the best kind of political power, that of appointive lay leadership. These characteristics are reflected in the following interviews in which Mrs. Porter describes her long service in local, state, and national Democratic party women's activities and as the traditional, but uniquely effective, feminine member of the San Francisco Planning Commission.

Interviews were recorded on October 9, 13, 21, 27, and November 3, 1976, at Mrs. Porter's comfortable flat on 27th Avenue in San Francisco. There would be fresh coffee and pastry, and a coal fire if the morning was foggy. Mrs. Porter shared her recollections gaily, as if with a friend, objective about the ups and downs of winning and losing political struggles, and cautious about sensitive details of old issues.

Mrs. Porter's political memories go back to the early 1930s, when people in her circle discussed candidates and issues with interest, and encouraged her to become involved in the League of Women Voters, but were startled when she became active in election campaigns. She reminisces vividly about the magic of Franklin Roosevelt's speeches, the fireworks of intraparty controversies, (the leadership of Helen Gahagan Douglas and William Malone,) the groundswell of support for John F. Kennedy. She also speaks succinctly of the rationales of political fund-raising and patronage.

Her husband, Dr. Charles Porter, encouraged her to take on her first political responsibilities, pointing out that she seemed bored with a purely social life. Because of concern for his health, and because of the cost of party office, she did not continue with national Democratic activities, although she continued to be active in local elections, and was still while these interviews were being recorded.

Appointed to the Planning Commission by both Democratic and Republican mayors, she has a command of planning concepts that ranges from the grand boulevards of the 1928 Burnham Plan to the intricacies of environmental impact reports and neighborhood participation in contemporary community development proposals. In addition to the work of the Planning Commission, Mrs. Porter touches on planning activities carried on by the

mayor's office and the redevelopment agency, giving an insight into the complexities of administrative politics in a large urban county.

After nearly forty years in party and community service, Mrs. Porter concludes that politics is "participation in life to a very full extent" and that many men are quite at ease with women as a viable force in public life.

Mrs. Porter reviewed the edited transcript of these interviews and approved it with minor changes. The appendix includes an article on planning which she drafted at the request of the San Francisco Examiner shortly after completing her term on the Planning Commission. The illustrations and other appendix materials are from her personal collection of political memorabilia.

Gabrielle Morris,
Interviewer-Editor

14 March 1976
Regional Oral History Office
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I PERSONAL BACKGROUND

[Date of Interview I: 9 October 1975]

Morris: When we met last week to plan these interviews, we talked about the events we should cover in your public life. Today, to start the memoir itself, will you tell us something of your personal background?

Porter: Morty Fleishhacker told me about your office interviewing him--he said you even wanted to know about his grandparents! I suppose you want to know how old I am. Everybody knows that, since Herb Caen had it in his column twice in January of this year.

We had a very controversial time on the Planning Commission several years ago over approval of the Transamerica building. I thought they should have their building and Herb Caen was opposed to that. Then I had my accident and was in Presbyterian Hospital and Larry Liebert, the Chronicle reporter, called me up because he heard there were going to be some planning commissioners meeting in my room, and I told him my room had a lovely view of the Transamerica tower.

So he told Herb Caen and Herb Caen wrote this item about me looking out at that needle of the tower when I was in Presbyterian Hospital--the hospital, another Caen anathema, is an entirely different style architecturally..I don't know why they did the hospital in this massive style. It looks like Morro Castle or something of that sort.

Anyway, he ended by saying I was the 'seventy-six year old marvelous planning commissioner' and he wished me well. I don't care about my age; I've never even thought of it. But you are sort of affronted to have the whole world say, 'I didn't think she was that old.'

Morris: I would have thought a good deal younger.

Porter: I was in the hospital three weeks, and I guess I went to a Planning Commission meeting two weeks after that. So he had another item on

Porter: this seventy-six year old--

Morris: Marvel who was back on her feet? [Laughter]

Porter: [Laughter] Well, there's no use.

Morris: That means you're really a twentieth century girl.

Father's Family: Gormans and Mahonys

Morris: One of the clippings in your scrapbook said that your uncle was a territorial pioneer.

Porter: My great uncle. He owned the first steamboat that went between San Francisco and Stockton, and San Francisco and Sacramento.

Morris: How did he come to the Bay Area?

Porter: He must have come over the Isthmus, or perhaps he came around the Horn, in 1847, '46.

Morris: And his name was--?

Porter: Domingo Marcucci. He was in the Civil War as a captain. Whether or not California would vote for the Emancipation Proclamation was one of the touch-and-go things because there were many southerners here. My husband, who was out of my generation more than thirty years--all of his family married late. I don't know whether I told you that my husband's nephew and his grandfather were more than one hundred years apart. The grandson was born in 1918 and the grandfather in 1817.

But this may interest you, Charles' father was the owner and publisher of the Contra Costa Gazette. Small newspapers like that had a heavy impact in that era, and his editorials were quoted throughout the country from time to time. He was a state senator from Contra Costa County, and he voted for the Emancipation Proclamation. I have a copy showing the senators and assemblymen who voted for it. I gave it to some of the younger people in the family. I don't know whether they care or not; their children will care.

Anyway, when Congress had passed the Emancipation Proclamation--California then had to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, and I had the impression that the California ratification was important.

Morris: Was Domingo Marcucci your mother's uncle?

Porter: No. He was my father's uncle by marriage.

Morris: Was your father born in California?

Porter: No, he was born in Boston.

Morris: He came to California when?

Porter: When he was six years old. First his father came. Then he sent for his wife, my grandmother, and I judge maybe two children--that there was a little girl, because the children used to be closely spaced. He sent for his sisters, and I told you the piano story.

Morris: Tell me again so that we have it on the tape.

Porter: Well, my grandfather, like many people in the early days, came to California by himself, and established himself. Then he sent to Boston for his family. Then, after having sent for his immediate family, he had two maiden lady sisters who were in their twenties, and he sent them the money to come to California. It took the mails quite a time in those days, and after a fairly long period, he received a letter saying: Dear David, We are so grateful to you for sending us the money to come to San Francisco. But we have always wanted a piano, and we have used the money to buy a piano. So we won't be able to join you in San Francisco. But I'm sure you understand. [Laughter] So he proceeded to save more money and sent it to them again, and they arrived with the piano.

Morris: That must have been quite a trip.

Porter: Things like sterling silver, pianos, paintings, Irish lace curtains, were important in that era, and there wasn't the general affluence in which everybody had them, or at least a substitute.

Morris: So that once you had something like this, you would take it wherever you went.

Porter: Yes. And also Havilland china. Look--I'm sure these cups are 1880. [Picks up cup from coffee tray.]

Morris: They're lovely. Were they your mother's?

Porter: No, they were my great aunt's.

Morris: Isn't that fine!

Your grandfather was David Gorman?

Porter: Yes. He died at thirty-three. He was the most important printer with

Porter: the largest business in San Francisco. By some legerdemain my grandmother brought up her five children without going out to work. With the properties he had left her she wasn't affluent, but she did have enough to have a pleasant home.

Morris: Did the printing business stay in the family?

Porter: No. But my great uncles were the largest builders here. They built the St. Francis Hotel, the Shreve Building, I think the Fairmont-- all of the large buildings after the Fire. They were the head of this close-knit family in which people helped each other, and they helped any of the less prosperous members of the family.

Morris: What was your grandmother's maiden name?

Porter: One was Margaret Mahony and the other was Mary Murray.

Morris: They sound like good Irish names.

Porter: Yes they are, although I am not involved in any religious matters, you know.

Mother's Family: Boyhans and Murrays

Morris: Was it Margaret or Mary who was married to David?

Porter: Margaret was married to David.

Morris: Was Mary Murray also a San Francisco girl?

Porter: No, she was from New Haven. Her parents came from Ireland, and then she was born in New Haven, and she married John Boyhan there.

In that period, there was a great difference of opinion on the Civil War in the north. There were many northerners who were very unsympathetic, and among them was my grandfather, John Boyhan of New Haven, Connecticut. There was a practice in which people were permitted to buy what was called a "substitute." For five hundred dollars, it was possible to find a young man who would go to war in your place, and my grandfather, disapproving of the Civil War and having more than five hundred dollars, paid for a substitute. He left his new bride in New Haven and came to San Francisco to establish himself. I judge there were either family, friends, or connections where the women stayed until their husbands established themselves. Then he sent for his wife [telephone interruption]--

Morris: What did he establish himself in when he got to San Francisco?

Porter: In the carriage-making business. All I know is he was successful; he used to pay fifty dollars for his boots [laughter] which in 1864 or '65 or '66 was a great deal of money.

Morris: An astronomical sum, yes.

Porter: I don't know why that unimportant bit of legend was passed on. Now, my mother was born at the corner of Grant Avenue and Bush. This was really early San Francisco, because that was a residential area and I imagine not too good streets; I understand they had wooden sidewalks.

Morris: In those years, many people tended to live quite close to their businesses. Was the carriage works nearby?

Porter: It was south of Market.

Morris: Did your mother know your father while they were growing up in San Francisco?

Porter: No. I think they were in their twenties when they met. People knew who other people were, though. My father's family were very prosperous and therefore known in the community.

Morris: Did your father go into his uncle's building firm?

Porter: He did, and he was their manager. I remember my mother saying that-- as a little girl--she would see the carts on the street filled with hams and turkeys and groceries, going to the convent, the gift of Mahony brothers, who were my great uncles.

Morris: So your mother and father were married in San Francisco.

Porter: Yes. In 1890.

Morris: Your father's name was--

Porter: Michael Joseph Gorman.

Morris: Add your mother?

Porter: Was Ellen Marie Boyhan. I have never heard that name before or since.

Morris: It's an unusual name, but very definitely has an Irish flavor.

Porter: My grandfather's father is the one who first came over from Ireland.
[Telephone interruption]

Porter: I tried to find the town he lived in when I was in Dublin for several weeks in 1973. I couldn't find it on the map, but I did meet a tremendously great man.

Visit with deValera, 1973

Porter: This is how it happened. There was a Supervisor here whose name was Andrew Gallagher--he had always liked me as a planning commissioner, and he was a friend of deValera and had been since deValera lived in San Francisco. His wife, who's always been extraordinarily nice to me, keeping in touch, calling me, knew I was going to Ireland and she said: Wouldn't you like to meet the president? I'd never thought of it and said: Delighted.

So there was a great deal of correspondence because deValera was going out of office a few weeks after the time I was there. But it was arranged that I was to have a meeting with him--it was set for a Tuesday--with the request that I phone the president's secretary immediately when I arrived in Dublin, which I did. The very nice secretary said to me (this was Saturday): Could you by any chance come this evening?

I said it was raining, but anytime--she said: I'm so afraid, with the pressure of people, that we may have to cancel the Tuesday meeting, and the president will see you at eight o'clock.

Well, the hotel arranged to get us a taxi. We went for miles (it seemed to me) through Phoenix Park. We had to go through gates where we were identified, and drove some more before we came to the president's house where we were met by the president's military aide. The president's house was built by the British viceroy at the end of the 18th century--I have a newspaper picture of it; I love beautiful old houses.

We were shown into the drawing room, the most beautiful room, with eighteenth-century English furniture and Donegal rugs. I had never known what a Donegal rug was, but it's as beautiful as a Chinese rug. We surreptitiously [laughter] looked around the room at the beautiful things, and the president opened the door and said: Come in, and he talked to us for half an hour.

I had said to him: Mr. President, I was here in 1956, but Ireland seems so much more prosperous now. In 1956, you were thankful for the poor people--your ancestors--who'd left a hundred and twenty-five years ago. But this, in 1973, it is a different island.

He said: When I was a young man fighting for the Irish Revolution, the newsboys put newspapers around their feet because they were bare-foot and they were so cold in the streets of Dublin. Now this is the best-fed nation in Europe. Then he said (and this is the reason we

Porter: were there, a connection with a loyal friend)--he asked how Mrs. Gallagher was and said: My friend, Andy Gallagher (this was before the British had recognized Southern Ireland.) came to Denver seven times to meet me and raised two million dollars for my cause.

So that is the reason--because Mrs. Andrew Gallagher liked me and wrote a note, I had a tremendous experience. Or does that seem a great experience to you?

Morris: That's a marvelous story. I'm always struck by the fact that deValera lived in San Francisco as a young man.

Porter: After I came home, I read all I could about him. One had a sense of greatness, meeting him. He said: You know, I'm going blind and I can scarcely see.

Morris: Oh, that's a pity!

Porter: But Mrs. deValera whom I did not meet--(he was ninety then, and she was older)--was a Celtic scholar. She translated some of the old fables, and she was a tremendous person. Then they showed us the rooms in which the banquet for Kennedy was held, to which one hundred people from Dublin were invited. You know what that must have been.

Then we were taken on the terrace and shown the Kennedy tree that he had planted, which the military aide said they were nurturing very carefully.

Morris: That's a marvelous story.

Porter: But do you know that deValera was head of the League of Nations? I didn't know any of this until I came home and read one or two biographies on him.

Morris: That's a fascinating sidelight.

Growing Up in San Francisco

Morris: Were you the eldest child in your family?

Porter: No, I'm the youngest.

Morris: I see. How many brothers and sisters?

Porter: One.

Morris: An older brother?

Porter: Yes.. John.

Morris: And where did you grow up in San Francisco? What neighborhood?

Porter: Well, my grandfather owned property on what is now Ashbury Heights, and I was born there. Then my grandfather owned property at 20th and Guerrero, and we lived in what was known as a Westlake cottage--

Morris: It was a particular kind of architecture?

Porter: Yes--which had, I think, six large rooms. Then my father and mother bought a house on 20th near Castro, a Victorian two-story. Then, after my father's death, we moved to Jones and Union.

Morris: Back downtown.

Porter: Yes. Then I married and moved here, and I have been living here ever since.

Morris: So that you lived in several different parts of the city, when it was much opener and--

Porter: My great uncle owned the so-called wedding-cake house at the corner of Golden Gate and Scott. Do you know the house?

Morris: I don't, but I know about the wedding-cake house architecture.

Porter: Well, that is one. I think about thirteen or fourteen rooms. Beautiful parquet floors. The Victorian houses had two staircases, a servants' staircase [laughing] and the family staircase.

Then I had a great aunt who lived at 2011 Golden Gate, which is near, I think, Presidio. (Do they call it Presidio as such?)

Morris: Did you have lots of cousins that you spent time with when you were growing up?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Where did you go to school?

Porter: I went to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and then I went to Lowell High School.

Morris: With all these Irish connections, you said that you had not been active with the church. Were you raised a Catholic?

Porter: Yes, but after I was fourteen--I really was not much concerned with religious matters.

[Tape off briefly]

Morris: Tell me about your education and your experiences, you and your brother, growing up in San Francisco. What kinds of things did you do as a family, as youngsters? Weekend outings?

Porter: Yes. Golden Gate Park was a place where one went on Sundays. The friends were usually relatives and selected neighbors in that area.

Morris: Who selected? Your mother and father cared who you played with?

Porter: Not my father--my mother. In that era, it was amazing how people permitted their children to only play with certain other children on the block.

Morris: What were your mother's ideas of who made a suitable companion?

Porter: Decorum. [Laughter]

Morris: Did she have interests outside her children and household?

Porter: No. She sewed beautifully, and she was a very broadminded person. In that time, I had a friend--a school friend--who was a Methodist, and she asked me to go to church with her one Sunday. The church was relatively small, and I was an attractive, well-mannered child, and all the Methodists thought I was delightful and that Caroline was fortunate to have such a friend, until they found I was a Catholic visiting the Methodists on Sunday. I was positively verboten. But my mother had none of that prejudice.

Morris: She didn't mind if you had a friend who was a Methodist.

Porter: Oh no, no. Christian Science, Episcopalian--she merely cared about the children's family and whether they were being well brought up.

Morris: Did your father take much interest in the raising of you and your brother?

Porter: Well, I don't think fathers were as involved as they are now. I know he cared for us. I think my mother very seldom said: This is a matter your father has to decide. She decided it.

Morris: In other words, she looked after the home and the children, and he was involved in his business.

Porter: And earning the living.

Morris: How about your father's interest in the community and in politics?

Porter: He was mostly interested in his family. I had heard vaguely when he was young that he'd been interested in some political things, but I don't remember what they were. In that era, not so many people were involved in outside things. I think the involvements for men were political, in which very few men really participated; for women there were church activities, and my mother never got involved in those. Perhaps that's the reason I don't have strong religious affiliations.

[Mrs. Porter added the following reminiscences to the transcript:

I remember

As a small child standing on the sidewalk on Market Street to see the Decoration Day (Memorial Day) Parade go by with my great uncle a Captain in the Civil War marching with the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic (the Union Army) I vaguely remember that a few Confederate veterans also marched. Memorial or Decoration Day was then an important holiday and the graves in the military as well as private cemeteries were decorated.

Street cars--cable and horse drawn were an early memory and the usual means of transportation. Some owned carriages, usually having two horses and coachman, but the public transportation was widely used. Hansom cabs called hacks were in abundance and used as we use taxis. I remember when my great aunt gave a beautiful children's party at her home and sent a hack to pick up the children at their various homes. The children ranged from 4 to 8 and 14 of them crowded into the hack, beside the coachman on the roof and packed inside. The sight amused the neighborhoods through which it passed.

Another childhood memory was of my great Aunt Julia for whom I was named. She travelled to Europe and China and Japan. On her return we were given Japanese Kimonos, wooden shoes, parasols, which we donned and went into the street to edify and make envious our playmates. There was no quota on luggage in those days.

Another great treat was lunch on the Gold or Mary Garret, two stern wheeler river boats owned by my great uncle.]

II MARRIAGE, FRIENDSHIPS, AND NEW HORIZONS

Work and Women Friends

Morris: Did you go on to college?

Porter: I went back to college. I went back to do sporadic things in which I was interested. But my father died, and--

Morris: While you were still in your teens?

Porter: Well, in my late teens. So after I'd finished high school, I took a secretarial course, and I did very well. I seemed to get rather large salaries for that time. I was intelligent; I think I was easy to have around.

Morris: If your father hadn't died while you were that age, do you think you would have gone on to college?

Porter: Oh, yes.

Morris: Did your brother?

Porter: No. He became a marine engineer.

Morris: Was the construction business still in the family?

Porter: No.

Morris: So he went to sea and is no longer part of San Francisco?

Porter: Well, he always came back here.

Morris: So, you went to work as a secretary here. Who'd you work for in San Francisco? You said you got jobs that were pretty good for women in those days. [Pause] What kinds of jobs did women have, aside from secretarial work?

Porter: I worked for the Associated Oil, and the secretary of the corporation was Gail Laughlin, who was the aunt of Eileen Harris, wife of the federal judge, George Harris.

[tape off briefly]

Not many people realized there was a woman as corporate secretary. But occasionally these things happened.

Morris: Was secretary of the company at that point an actual operating job, or was she more on the board to sign papers?

Porter: I haven't any idea. But she surely must have been working with the president, vice-president, the treasurer.

Morris: Were there close friendships from your school days that carried on through your working years?

Porter: There was one. Then the friendships that carried on--of course, my dear, I've reached the stage where my friends are beginning to die. But I had some close friendships that I had since the early years of my marriage. Having married out of my generation, I had some older women who were wonderful friends--like Lincoln Steffens' sister, Laura Suggett, who had been, I think, librarian for the state.

Morris: They grew up in Sacramento.

Porter: Yes. Well, she thought that I was this bright, young thing whose mind needed molding. And also, I knew Lincoln Steffens. I think I told you that I read his book in the manuscript; he wanted my reaction.

Morris: That must have been very exciting. Did he have strong opinions about the role of women?

Porter: I think that there were a group of men who had, not strong opinions, but just as a matter of fact accepted the premise that if a woman were able, she should be able to do anything. When he married Ella Winter, he encouraged her to write. He accepted the--I mean, Sara Bard Field was an important person; it was not something questioned that she was a woman, that she was an individual. Also, with my brother-in-law, Bruce Porter, and The Lark-- Carolyn Wells, Florence Lundberg, and some others were part of that. They were accepted because of their ability and the job they were doing.

Morris: This sounds like a whole group of which your husband and you were a part. How did you meet these interesting folk?

Porter: [Laughter] I met them through my husband. My niece says the Porters were the first Women Libbers.

[Tape turned over]

Morris: How did you come to meet your husband?

Porter: I met him through a friend who was deeply devoted to me. [Laughter]

Morris: This is somebody that you'd met through work?

Porter: No. People had dinner parties, just as they do now; people met people in the same way. Somebody invited you to dinner, or had a dinner party, and the young man became interested in you, and he telephoned you (everything's just the same) and asked you to go to someplace to dinner or to the theater, and people became friends, or they fell in love.

Morris: Some things don't change.

Porter: No, not at all. And you meet people in the same way.

The Porter Brothers, Charles and Bruce

Morris: Had Dr. Porter been here in San Francisco a long time?

Porter: Yes. He was born here. Then he lived in Martinez. The Porters had one of the houses that was brought around the Horn and assembled. Did you know?

Morris: Yes, I have heard of that.

Porter: They used to do it; they used to ship out unassembled houses. They shipped around the Horn a number of these New England houses which were assembled when they got here, and the Porters lived in one of those in Martinez, which I imagine has gone. Then they lived at Clay and Baker. Then at Pacific and Presidio in one of the lovely shingled houses they built.

Morris: Had you known any of the Porters before you got acquainted with your future husband?

Porter: No. You see, there was a gap of thirty-something years with my husband. But if you are interested in the Porters, there were three brothers and three sisters. The sisters married at the right and proper age. There was Bruce Porter, the painter, who went to Europe to study. His two younger brothers stayed at home. I think my husband [Charles] worked in Vickery-Atkins and Torrey, the art store; I don't know whether the younger brother worked or not. [Since the father had died, the boys

Porter: had to carry on the house in which their very brilliant mother ruled things, I think, with an iron hand. Her eldest son worshipped her. Well, he went to Europe and then he came back and said to my husband: Now it's your turn; you go to college. I'll take care of the responsibility of the house.

So my husband went to college. Then the younger brother, Robert, who was five years younger, was told he was to go to college; so he went to Harvard.

Morris: And your husband became a dentist?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: That took an extra year or two of training, didn't it?

Porter: Well, he was on the faculty at the University of California. Of course, dentistry was different when he started from the way it is now; I don't know whether, when he ended, it was very different.

Morris: Did he train at the University of California?

Porter: Yes, and he was on the staff of the University.

Morris: Here in San Francisco?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: What a nice geographically tidy story.

You said your mother-in-law was a brilliant woman.

Porter: She was a very strong-minded woman with great imagination, and I think vision. I remember when my brother-in-law was dying and having his mind wander, as people do, and he kept talking about his mother. I said to him: Was she beautiful?

He said: Beautiful never, but the most charming, fascinating woman I've ever known.

Morris: Had she lived in San Francisco while her husband was still running the Contra Costa Gazette?

Porter: No, she went to Contra Costa. Lincoln Steffens tells of his mother coming here; I don't think she even had any relatives. But marriageable young woman who didn't find husbands on the eastern seaboard frequently came to the western seaboard.

Morris: That's a pattern that has continued.

Porter: My mother-in-law came to visit her sister. Certainly everyone was thinking of marriage because that was all women could do in those days.

Morris: Mrs. Porter the elder had some across the country by herself to visit her--

Porter: I have an idea she came by ship to visit her sister. I think her name was Marie Bonnard. Well anyway, it was in Rialto, California.

Even in this era, I may invite two attractive young people who don't know each other to dinner, thinking it's a good idea.

Morris: You said that there was a generation's gap between you and Charles. Had he been married before?

Porter: No.

Morris: Was this a whirlwind courtship?

Porter: It shouldn't make sense. As I look back, it makes no sense to have a gap of thirty-three years with a man who's never been married. But I had the most wonderful marriage, and these things happen.

Would you like another old local custom?

Morris: Certainly.

Porter: In those days, every San Franciscan bought gold stocks, including my grandparents. When you bought gold stocks, you often were given gold nuggets with it. Well, my wedding ring is made from one of those nuggets which my grandparents gave us.

Morris: What a charming idea.

Your husband obviously was very much interested in all kinds of community activities and felt you should be too.

Porter: My brother-in-law, Bruce Porter, had been part of the Burnham Plan, and in the things that were the arts he was interested. Charles was making the dental college a more important college. His friend, Jim Sharp, had been head of the college (and Jim Sharp was both a physician and a dentist).

In those days, a man who was head of the college would also practice dentistry. But these men realized that they had to have a full-time president of the dental school. I don't know what kind of work they had to do, but it was a great deal, and they finally got Guy Millbury as the head of the dental school. He was the first full-time; maybe you'd better check on this, but I'm sure he was the first full-time head of

Porter: the school.

Morris: Those were the years when the whole medical school was doing a tremendous amount of growth and development. There was Langley Porter, who was head of the medical school for a while. Am I right-- he is not a part of your Porters?

Porter: No, they're another Porter.

Dream for San Francisco: The Burnham Plan, 1905

Morris: You said that Bruce Porter was involved with the Burnham Plan. I haven't heard of that before.

Porter: Oh, dear! Shocking!

Morris: That's why we need the record from you.

Porter: The Burnham Plan was the dream for San Francisco. [Goes away from microphone, returns with book]

Morris: That's a handsome book.

Porter: It's very valuable. It was given me by my brother-in-law. It was printed, presented to the mayor and board of supervisors in September, 1905. I'd almost forgotten. "Report on a Plan for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco."

Morris: And that was the year before the Fire.

Porter: Yes. "An association for the improvement and adornment of San Francisco was formed on the Fifteenth of January, 1904, by the following gentlemen: Messrs. James D. Phelan, E. R. Taylor, William Greer Harrison, E. W. Hopkins, Henry J. Crocker, Leon Sloss, Charles E. Green, Allen Pollack, Thomas McHaven, R. J. Tousig, Abe Pasens, Walter Martin--" This gives you a sense of the leadership of the community.

"These people formed this association and contributed the money. James Phelan was president, William Irwin vice-president, Leon Sloss treasurer, and on the board of directors were Herbert Law, William Greer Harrison, Thomas McGee, Allen Pollack, R. B. Hale, and T. C. Friedlander; Thomas McGee acted as secretary. Today there is a membership of over four hundred. On the board of directors: R. J. Tousig, Bruce Porter, Captain R. H. Fletcher, and P. N. Lillienthal have been added. The association is incorporated."

Porter: They contributed the money to bring Daniel Burnham out from Chicago to draw a plan for San Francisco, and sections of this have been implemented; O'Shaughnessy Boulevard was a part of the Burnham Plan.

Morris: What a felicitous coincidence that there was a plan like this in existence when so much rebuilding had to be done in this city. Did the Supervisors use this plan after the Fire?

Porter: In one section of town [laughter], then absolutely ignored it in another section. I think we'd have the port very different and a beautiful waterfront, but many things--much of the rebuilding was done in a hurry.

The Lapham Planning Commission did a Green Belt Plan. We had a senior planner, Glenn Hall, who walked from one section to another through all of the open spaces, and we did get a Green Belt Plan in which sections of Twin Peaks have been kept open to the public.

Morris: So that as a young woman, you had contact with the people who had done some of the earliest thinking in terms of physical planning. That's really remarkable.

Social and Intellectual Life in the 1930s

Morris: It sounds as if you and your husband spent quite a lot of time with Bruce Porter and his family.

Porter: Well, in those days--

Morris: You were married when?

Porter: 1924.

Morris: And was Bruce already married?

Porter: Yes. He was married to Margaret James, the daughter of William James, which is an impressive ancestry, and the niece of Henry.

Morris: I should say! Did Henry and William ever come to visit?

Porter: They were dead by the time I arrived.

Morris: My chronology is not as good as it should be. But you and your husband did spend a lot of time with Bruce and his wife.

Porter: Yes. My sister-in-law, who was ten years older than I, also was



Celebration of birthday of George L. Bean II, son of close family friend, Mrs. Jackson Bean.



Dedication of The Heritage, senior citizens residence. Dan Murphy (right), Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Warren Perry. V.M. Hanks, Jr. photo.

Porter: younger than her husband but not as much younger as I was. She greeted me with open arms, and I saw a great deal of her. But families did.

Morris: A good part of your social life was with your family?

Porter: And with Charles' medical and dental friends. He was one of the leading dentists here. There was Dr. Alexander, who was a physician, Dr. Morrow, Dr. Suggett (Lincoln Steffens' brother-in-law was a dentist), Dr. Bean was a dentist, and Dr. Rulofson. Our social life really hinged on those people.

Now in my life I have four or five groups, but that's because of my public participation. Don't you find that you have a limited social group?

Morris: Well, they seem to be in somewhat separate groups. So there was the medical group, your husband's profession--

Porter: When we had the family, we didn't usually have Charles' friends because the family had different interests.

Morris: The family interests were what?

Porter: Well--the family. [Laughter] The family and what the various members were doing--what Bruce was doing, whether he was doing a garden, amusing tales about people.

Morris: He went to Europe to study painting. Then, when he got back here, he got involved in--

Porter: He was really a Renaissance man because he did The Lark, which is poetry; he did painting; he did stained glass (some of his windows are in various churches). Then he went off the deep end on Bacon and Shakespeare--you know.

Morris: Whether Bacon was Shakespeare or not?

Porter: Yes, you know that. He made an exhaustive study on that at one period, which was before I knew him. But really it seems to me that people had a broader culture--at least the people I knew--had a broader culture than they have now. And the young are not as well educated. Would you agree?

Morris: I see some signs of this kind of Renaissance interests in some of today's young people; I find it very reassuring and appealing.

How did your brother-in-law and your husband get along? Did they agree.

- Porter: They were good friends and the family was united politically. Some of the people who married on, as my nephew put it--
- Morris: Married on to the family? That's lovely.
- Porter: Yes--disagreed. I remember in the Roosevelt era, I never had a dinner party from October till November 10th [laughter] because we didn't wish to lose our best friends.
- Morris: Then Charles and Bruce were both interested in politics?
- Porter: Well, not the way you would interpret it today, going to political meetings. But intellectually they were; they had very strong views on legislation, candidates. They were not the kind of people that will, the night before election, say: Which one will I take?
- Morris: But what about the other step--actually getting involved in selecting candidates and getting them elected?
- Porter: Oh, they would have none of that! My political involvement was a matter of awe [laughter] for the family, but approval that anybody in the family should be out doing these things.
- Morris: You've spoken a couple of times of accomplished women that you became acquainted with, who felt that you should be encouraged and developed. Could you talk about that a little?
- Porter: Certainly. Laura Suggett (Lincoln Steffens' sister); we used to see the Suggetts at least once a week. They had one of two Rolls Royces in San Francisco. In that era, you drove on Sunday, and you could go to Palo Alto in half an hour.
- Morris: In a Rolls Royce!
- Porter: In anything--in a Ford, anything. There wasn't too much traffic on the road; everybody didn't have an automobile. You drove down to see friends and then you went out to dinner.
- Morris: And it was a lovely country drive.
- Porter: But I remember Laura Suggett insisting that I join the League of Women Voters saying: It's the only organization, and you must become a member.
- Morris: Had she been involved in the battle for women's suffrage?
- Porter: No. There was a battle for the library, and she wanted the--what do they call it?--the moving library--

Morris: The neighborhood library idea?

Porter: Well, that throughout the state there were no libraries in many places, and in large areas like San Francisco there were a very great number of books. So there was a plan, which was implemented where, if somebody in some remote village wanted a certain book, and there was somebody there who came through I think from the state at certain times--

Morris: Like a bookmobile idea?

Porter: Yes. I don't know how they did it, but I judge--if you wanted such and such a book, you could order it from some central place and it would be sent to you. It isn't called a mobile library.

Morris: No, that's a very recent term.

Porter: But the Suggetts paid--there was a Miss Eddy who either edited or did something, but the Suggetts paid \$10,000 to send her to Russia to tell the Russians about this plan. Lenin's wife (I think it was Lenin's wife and not Trotsky's) was the person who was head of the library system in Russia. The Russians adopted this idea of how do you give education to people who are away from the center.

Morris: Fascinating idea. Had the League been involved in this?

Porter: No.

Morris: But Laura had been?

Porter: She graduated from Goettingen with her master's or her doctorate, I don't know which, at the end of the century. She went to Stanford with Herbert Hoover, whom she hated with a deadly hatred, as you would expect Lincoln Steffens' sister to do.

Morris: There was a philosophical difference even as college students?

Porter: Oh, yes, yes.

Morris: That's interesting. Did she teach at Stanford?

Porter: No. She did her undergraduate work. She used to say to me: I have a Ph.D. which means absolutely nothing. The only thing it's good for is to impress people.

Do you feel that today?

Morris: I've never heard anybody repeat it about themselves, but I've heard the opinion expressed in general about some Ph.D.'s. How did you

Morris: feel about the fact that she had a Ph.D. and you hadn't gotten to college?

Porter: Those things--and perhaps it was being a Porter, or marrying into the Porters--it was what you knew rather than having a mark that you had done something and that you were intellectual. You know, intellectually, that you cannot discuss an idea, get a new thought from many people who are Ph.D.'s.

Lincoln Steffens said my greatest asset was that I had a free mind and that I hadn't turned into a conformist. Now, his nephew at Harvard failed some course and he went to the teacher and said: I could have passed that. I knew what you wanted me to say. But I didn't believe what you wanted me to say, and therefore you flunked me.

Morris: And what did the teacher respond, or did that survive?

Porter: I don't know.

Morris: How did your husband feel about whether or not you should join the League?

Porter: Oh, I did whatever I wanted to do. When I became active in the League-- I was a passive member at first--he was very interested.

I didn't know what I wanted--look, I was interested in art and poetry. I used to know a great deal about Chinese porcelains which I think you will see are very nice; I think it's something you keep up with.

Morris: And you continue to enjoy. The pieces you've collected in this room are lovely.

Porter: That is one of the things I enjoyed. I enjoyed reading tremendously.

Charles said to me: You're going to be alone a long, long time and you can't fill your life with Chinese art and poetry. You should do something for your community. You should have an interest and you should give. (I think you see it quoted among the articles in the scrapbook.)

Morris: At what point in your marriage did he begin to express this kind of idea?

Porter: It was when I was being asked to do things and I was prone to say "No."

Morris: Had you children?

Porter: No, I hadn't, and you see, that makes the difference; I never would have done all of the things I've done if I had children. I wouldn't have had time.

Morris: As a young girl growing up, did you expect to have children?

Porter: Yes. I expected to have children when we were married, and so did Charles. But I didn't, and I think I'm much more a wife than a mother, because I didn't become hysterical about it as some women do. You do know they do.

Morris: I suppose that's true.

Porter: I had a friend who nearly had a breakdown. In fact, I had two such friends; one adopted a child and then had a child of her own, the other didn't adopt a child.

Morris: It really caused her personal life difficulty?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Would you tell us for the record, for people who don't know about it, the kind of social life that went with being a physician's wife in San Francisco in the 1930s?

Porter: Well, we were very active in giving luncheons, playing bridge, and giving teas.

Morris: How did you manage a household?

Porter: That was no problem. There was plenty of help. I even had the luxury of a marvelous Swedish woman who used to clean my closets and drawers.

Morris: She was your housekeeper?

Porter: No, she was an extra person. The housekeeper kept the house, did the cooking, and announced dinner and served (which few people have anymore). Then there was a housecleaner, who came in every week to clean the house thoroughly. I have still with me the Japanese I've had for thirty years, and I keep my fingers crossed. If I lose him, will I be able to get even cleaning help?

I announced to the Democratic National Committee in 1945 that I would be unable to carry on my position because all the Japanese had been removed from San Francisco, and I had no help. Well, help did work out.

Morris: That's an aspect of the Japanese Relocation I'd never thought of. Who took the household jobs when they left?

- Porter: We were having the refugees from Europe, from Germany, and from some of these other European countries. Many of these people who had been used to leisurely lives were reduced to doing domestic work.
- Morris: If the pattern of the wife in your group was a lot of social activities, how about clothes? Were they a particular--
- Porter: I remember just for my husband and myself, wearing a long dress. I mean, there were grades of dresses, but I remember long, simple black lace dresses and frequently wearing them for dinner when we were alone.
- Morris: And your pictures in your scrapbook showed some elegant hats.
- Porter: I've always been a hat person and have paid more for them than I should.
- Morris: Was there somebody special that you went to for hats?
- Porter: There was a woman whose name was Brownlee; when I was a bride, she was the chief milliner. Then she gave it up, and somebody whose name was Bessie--Bess Stein--took over and I went to her. Then I went to Frances--I've forgotten who. But now I buy them at Magnin's, and they're usually Emmy's or Mr. John's.
- Morris: So you've kept on wearing hats regardless of what the rest of the world is doing. Good for you. Did you design your own hats, or did the milliner pick out what she thought would look well on you?
- Porter: She picked them out and I decided whether I like them.
- Morris: Was this something your husband enjoyed--your hats?
- Porter: Well, I remember having a very expensive one banished. [Laughter]

Recollections of the League of Women Voters, San Francisco Center

- Morris: You said that you were a member of the League of Women Voters for some time before you got active. What turned you on?
- Porter: You see, in those days, the league did run a six-ring circus; it was called the San Francisco Center of the California League of Women Voters. There was always a little edge between the League and the Center part. But the Center part meant that we had large luncheons for individuals like Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, the president of Mills (you see, there were women doing things). When we had her luncheon, the elevator in the Western Women's Club dropped four stories.

Morris: Good heavens!

Porter: I remember when I was president we had Francis Perkins and Alice Longworth and we had Alice Masaryk (speaking also of women who--)

Morris: Was that Jan Masaryk's wife?

Porter: No, his sister.

Morris: Had the San Francisco Center existed before there was a League of Women Voters?

Porter: It was the outcome of the suffrage movement. People like Mrs. Ludwig Frank, Mrs. Alfred McLaughlin, Mrs. Jesse Steinhart (the first Mrs. Steinhart)--Mrs. Steinhart was a patient of my husband's, and I remember being so impressed with her because she was president of the League, and for some strange reason my interest never centered on being president myself. It never even occurred to me.

Morris: When did you decide that you'd like to try a shot at an executive kind of job?

Porter: The thing was, my mother died and I was shattered. I was out to do a League job and I did so beautifully that immediately I was put on the board. When I was on the board, I evidently did very well. There was a rift in those days between the rights and the lefts.

Morris: You're speaking of the political rights and lefts?

Porter: In the League. Yes, the people who wanted collective bargaining--things like that, which we have achieved and take for granted, were highly controversial things. Do you know even child labor existed when Roosevelt came in! And the talk of health insurance or medical insurance made the doctors' wives join the League to vote against it.

But this happened because I wanted to--I did a superb job because I was under emotional pressure. Maybe if I had been happy and relaxed, I wouldn't have done so well. But I did, and I was put upon the board.

Morris: What was the first job they asked you to do? Do you recall?

Porter: I can't remember what that paper was on.

Morris: It was a study kind of a thing.

Porter: Yes. Then there was this difference between the rights and the lefts, and I was the only person who was satisfactory to both sides. They said that I would be fair, which I was; I bent over so far backwards that when Helen Gahagan Douglas asked me to head the Northern California

Porter: Women's Division [of the Democratic party], I said I couldn't do it because the League would think I used it for political purposes. She waited a year and came back and asked me again.

Morris: Who do you recall as being those on the left and those on the right?

Porter: Maude Sutton was the only militant right person. Alice Burr was the most tremendous woman--she was wise and wonderful in a way that few people are. The being on the left was by present standards I should say a very faint left.

But Maude Sutton was furious because the Portland League had asked Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to be their guest and also that we had invited her. The people on the right didn't want her to speak to the Center. The left insisted Mrs. Roosevelt was the President's wife and if we could get her, we'd present her.

Morris: Were you already in the League when the General Strike was going on in 1934?

Porter: Yes. The League had Harry Bridges and Bernice Chapman, who was president of the San Francisco Center-- she owned the Bakersfield Californian, but she lived here in San Francisco.

Do you know, in those days we had university students in there?

Morris: As members?

Porter: No! We had a program with them, and they were all for communism and all that. [Laughter] I think Bernice Chapman said they shouldn't be educated at state expense.

Anyway, we had Harry Bridges speak, and some of the ladies hissed him. In those days Harry Bridges' English was not what it is today. It's an amazing thing, what that man has accomplished. But he always had a clear mind; he knew just exactly what he stood for.

[Pause to start Tape 2]

Porter: When Helen Gahagan Douglas was running for office, she always put on her brochures: Member of the League of Women Voters. In those years, I knew many Congressmen and United States Senators, and when they heard I was a past League president, it was like an accolade. I don't know what the League is doing now, but in that era, they studied the issue; they studied thoroughly and they had their facts. They appeared before Congress and spoke for their five-minutes. (I don't know whether you know; if you speak before Congress, you have five minutes and that's it.) But the League, in those days was highly respected by Congressmen and Senators.

Morris: When the League was doing its studies, did they do a specific study on the General Strike while it was going on?

Porter: No.

Morris: But they did bring in speakers?

Porter: They brought in Harry Bridges and the man who was doing the arbitration-- I think his name was Athern; he was an outstanding lawyer who did the arbitration--and they spoke before the League, and probably somebody from the shipping industry. Then Roger Lapham did a debate with Harry Bridges, and everybody came out respecting him tremendously because it was I think a pro-Bridges audience, but he was so straightforward.

Morris: Was the strike enough a matter of your daily life that people in the League were taking sides on it?

Porter: Yes. I remember driving along the Embarcadero with my brother, and my husband was just infuriated; he thought it was terribly dangerous. It's like all things you hear about; when you're really there, it doesn't seem as dangerous.

There were loads of people milling around. But at the time we were there, that was all that happened. Everybody bought a ham and a side of bacon to prepare for the seige. My brother-in-law was at Lake Tahoe, and we said: Stay there. (He was a delightful character, not really knowing how delightful he was.) He said: Not at all. We're returning promptly to share your hardships.

Well, the thing I did was go to Goldberg Bowen and order ham.

Morris: Two hams?

Porter: Yes, another, so they would be set. Of course, the strike was over rather shortly, and for the next six months every time you were invited to dinner, you had roast ham. [Laughter]

Morris: Did you tell me that the elder Mrs. Heller was on the League board when you joined?

Porter: Was she? She had been on the board, but whether she'd been on the nominating committee or what, I don't know. But I remember her. She wasn't on my board; whether she'd been on the previous one or not, I don't know.

Morris: How large a group was active in the League?

Porter: Do you know Martha Gerbode?

Morris: I feel as though I had; I wish I had known her.

Porter: Well, Martha was on my board--very pregnant. I remember Frank Gerbode calling me to say they had the baby. The board was very good, in that it stretched from Nan Frank and Alice Arnstein (who were the two women then old enough to have been in the Suffrage movement) to people like Martha who were--

Morris: She was younger than you.

Porter: Oh yes.

Morris: By today's standards, I would judge that you were young as a League president.

Porter: Well, I was considered fairly young, but I was older than Billie Degrucci. Do you know who she was? (Her mother was on the board--a most delightful woman.) She was Ann Treadwell and then she married a physicist at the University. I think she was president when she was very young.

Morris: Did I recall correctly that Lucretia Grady was on the board too at that point?

Porter: No, Lucretia never was League; she was purely political. You know, she'd been an actress--did you know that?

Norris: No, I didn't. I guess the first I heard about her was that she was very active in politics, and also of an old Spanish family.

Porter: Yes, the del Valles. But she was an actress in something called "Rose of the Rancho" and she really was a dramatic person.

Morris: What else about your career as president of the League? How did you like that experience with leadership?

Porter: Very much. I had a wonderful board, and we accomplished a great deal. We were all good friends.

Morris: Did many of those friendships continue on through the years?

Porter: Yes. As long as she lived, Alice Arnstein, who was my vice president and who was between a generation older (I imagine she was fifteen years or so older); and Alice Burr and all the people on the board are still my friends.

Morris: Did the friendships go then on beyond League activities and civic activities?

Porter: No. I was doing more things and they were doing less.

Morris: Do you recall some of the League studies while you were president?

Porter: Yes. Now, we had a study on health insurance, as it was called, and the doctors' wives joined the League in droves. Charlotte Mack, one of our very good members, paid somebody from the University of California to come and head the group so that nobody could say it was prejudiced. (The League never had any money for anything extra.) This young woman did a superb job, I thought, of being fair in the study.

Morris: You don't remember her name, do you?

Porter: No, I don't, but the position of pro health insurance and anti health insurance proponents remained unchanged.

Morris: Was it Emily Huntington?

Porter: No. Emily was a good friend of mine. Somebody in the lower echelon.

III NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMAN'S DIVISION, DEMOCRATIC PARTY:
CHAIRMAN, 1941-1943

Woman Power: The Barbara Armstrong Incident

Porter: Speaking of women having important positions, think of Dorothy Williams, assistant head of the Labor Department; Emily Huntington; Barbara Armstrong--they were all friends of mine.

Morris: Where did you become acquainted with them? I think of all three of them in regard to health insurance.

Porter: Well, I don't know whether it was through politics or what. I know Barbara was through politics, because she was dismissed from the OPA, and the lawyers at Boalt Hall divided into two factions--pro Barbara, against Barbara, and they were all in the OPA. So Barbara was dismissed for what they said was some abuse of operation. Somebody came to me and wanted me to meet her; so I went alone to meet with her, then I met with half a dozen other people; and I felt that Barbara had been unjustly treated.

Morris: This is with your Northern California Women's Division hat on?

Porter: Yes. So I telephoned Gladys Tillett in Washington and Lenore Hickock, the secretary of the national committee, and said: What can you do?

So they said: We'll see. They called back and said: We have decided to make an issue of this.

Ambrose O'Connor, who was vice-chairman on the men's side of the Democratic National Committee, went up the Hill to tell Prentiss Brown, who was head of the OPA, that Barbara Armstrong should be reinstated. I remember one of the political men in the office: What are we coming to? Do you see they reinstated that Armstrong woman?

Morris: You won! You got her reinstated!

Porter: Yes. So another man looked at him and said: Did you know Mrs. Porter did that?

- Porter: Well, that was where the women made an issue of making sure that a woman was reinstated.
- Morris: Was it because she was a woman, or was it because you felt the charge against her was unjust?
- Porter: That the charge was unjust. Also, we weren't going to have a top-ranked woman thrown out without justification; we would fight on that.
- Morris: In your scrapbook there's a copy of the telegram on this very instance, a telegram that Helen Gahagan Douglas sent off to Washington.
- Porter: Well, I sent it, but used Helen's name.
- Morris: I wondered how it got amongst your papers.
- Porter: You see, Helen was national committeewoman, which is more important than the state chairman. So, she as national committeewoman had more power.
- Morris: She delegated it to you to handle?
- Porter: Yes. She said to me, when I said I'd be Northern California chairman: You take the North and I'll take the South; whatever you do in the North, it's all right.

So I always had her backing.

Attitudes Toward Politics in the 1930s and '40s

- Morris: How did you get from a nonpartisan thing like the League into active politics?
- Porter: Because, I told you, there had been dissension in the women's Democratic ranks, and Helen Gahagan wanted what she considered first-rate leadership. So she found a Democrat and the League of Women Voters president, and I was always devoted to Roosevelt. It's very difficult for people to understand the magic of Roosevelt, who didn't live in that era. You were either so devoted that you almost were bemused, or people hated him so. But we were for Roosevelt. She knew I was a Democrat; I had League background; she knew I wasn't going off the deep end emotionally, because that's one thing the League teaches you. So it was she who, I told you, asked me twice to take it.
- Morris: Can we go back a minute and find out how you came to choose the

- Morris: Democratic party over the Republican when the Republicans were so strong in California.
- Porter: My background was Hiram Johnson Republican, which was liberal Republican.
- Morris: That's the Progressives?
- Porter: Yes; I'm speaking of my family. A child hears dinner table conversation. Then, when I married, my husband was, and I was inclined to be, liberal too. He was on the liberal side, and therefore we became Democrats.
- Morris: From a distance, before you got involved in campaigning. Did you take any active part in any of the mayoral elections?
- Porter: No, not then.
- Morris: Did the League do any kind of what's now called voter service? The kind of questionnaires and publication about--
- Porter: They had candidates' night always. I think they do more, but people didn't used to participate in politics the way they do not. I mean, all of Berkeley's involved, and any place over here, you may be invited to meet a candidate. That sort of thing never was thought of in those eras.
- Morris: The neighborhood coffee kind of thing.
- Porter: Yes. I remember a woman--a PR person--whose name is Milla Logan, whose husband had been an editor of the Chronicle, running a campaign, thinking of having people invited to the house to meet the candidate.
- Morris: This is when?
- Porter: That was '50, I think. I remember there was a woman whose name was Mrs. Henno (they had a dog and cat hospital on Arguello) who was active politically. She was the kind of person--in those days, they used to address envelopes. Now they have them done out of Los Angeles. She was asked if she would have this coffee party, and the campaign would supply the coffee and all. And she said no, they'd steal her silver. [Laughter] But she did!
- Morris: That's a non-libelous opinion.
- Porter: [Laughter] Somebody else had the coffee; but that was started in that period. Now all over, the candidate comes to meet small groups of people over coffee.

Morris: Another woman who's been very active in politics, in the Bay Area and throughout California, phrased it that in the good old days, back in the '40s, people expected leaders to say who the candidates ought to be, and waited for a recognized group of leaders to express opinions, and that that was the way people decided who to vote for. Is that the way it was?

Porter: Well, I told you about the meeting in Bob Kenny's office in the State Building when he was attorney general, at which this group of leaders from California sat down and chose the slate of candidates. Pat Brown was chosen as lieutenant governor. That was the disastrous '46 campaign when there was still cross-filing, and Earl Warren [laughing] got in in the primary, which caused a trauma that the party didn't recover from for two years. [Laughter]

We had a woman on that slate, too.

Morris: Did you! How did that come about?

Porter: Well, it was all very informal. Bob Kenny, of course, was the obvious one to run for governor, since he was already attorney general, and the only Democrat in statewide office. He was a brilliant maverick, and he said we had to have a woman.

Someone said: We've got to have someone for secretary of state, and a few names were mentioned.

Then somebody said: What about Lucille Gleason. She's got good connections in Los Angeles, and in the motion picture industries.

I think it was Mr. Malone who said: Call her up and see if she'll do it. So Bob Kenny did, and it was quite late and she was busy doing something and she said: Well, all right, if you can't get anybody else. And so she ran for secretary of state. It was my job to handle her, make sure she got to her Northern California meetings and so on.

Morris: My goodness! It all sounds so simple. Who all was at that meeting?

Porter: As I recall there was Ellie Heller and myself, George Reilly, Bill Malone, and of course Bob Kenny.

Morris: We're at the end of the tape. I think that's a good place to stop for today.

[Date of Interview II: 13 October 1975]
[Tape 2, side 2 begins]

Morris: You mentioned political discussions when you were growing up with your father and later with your husband and brother-in-law, and other talented acquaintances. I wondered if any of them ever talked about why they weren't more actively involved in politics, either in campaigning or--?

Porter: In that era, people other than the almost-professional politicians who made up the party organizations did not get involved in campaigning as they do today. People discussed politics in their homes. Maybe this will give you an idea of the era, and this applies to the forties, too.

I remember having a dinner party for Helen Gahagan Douglas in which were some of the brilliant leaders in their fields--Emily Huntington, Valeska Bary (who was the assistant regional head of Social Security), Dorothy Williams (who had an important post with the Labor Department), and there were a number of others; I think I had a dozen. My husband mixed the drinks and then said: Ladies, I'll bid you good evening. And Helen said to me: He's just like Mel. When the politicians come in the front door, he goes out the back. [Laughter]

I think people didn't--say, very much earlier--they never would have thought of being a county committee member. I don't know how to express it. I don't want to say well-bred people, but conservative people who lived their quiet, private lives, aside from their professions.

Morris: In some communities and in some groups there was a feeling that politics was not very nice. Is that the kind of thing?

Porter: Absolutely. Yes. Politics was something you didn't get mixed up in, and particularly Democratic politics. [Laughter]

Morris: What was there about Democratic politics?

Porter: The Democrats were not highly thought of by most conservative people in the twenties. It wasn't till Roosevelt became elected that people--then the great mass of people, not the so-called--what is something other than well-bred?

Morris: Well, I think a larger number of people.

Porter: People with prestige in the community, they were all Republicans. I think I told you I remember the time when--you get so many lawyers,

Porter: so many women, so many people, so many dentists, if you can, to endorse your candidate--and no well-known doctor or dentist would ever appear on any of these Democratic committees. But now you see them anxious to appear on them, and contributing sums of money. Of course, everybody is organizing now.

People put much more stress on their private lives then. You knew a certain group of people and they were the people you invited to dinner. One of the reasons that my life was more interesting was because, in addition to our personal friends, there would be at the Bruce Porters' these people--writers and philosophers from the eastern seaboard and from England who came. They called on my sister-in-law because of her father and her uncle. She would entertain them and when you were at one of her dinner parties, you listened quietly.

Morris: Were some of these visitors beginning to feel it was a good thing to take an active role in politics?

Porter: The activity would be to the extent of going to a meeting and listening to an outstanding person. I remember--well, that was later when Dudley Field Malone came and spoke. He came with Nell Wilson McAdoo to speak at this meeting. [Pause]

I think there was always a token woman. There had been national committeewomen. I remember in 1932, a woman in Oakland was national committeewoman. She was not thought too highly of by the intellectuals; she became a postmistress. [Laughter] There was this kind of political person, and then there was the kind of person who came in in the thirties for idealistic reasons because they believed in Roosevelt's program, which is accepted today. But again, in that era, there was child labor, no medicare, no collective bargaining--these were major revolutionary changes.

Morris: What particularly about Mr. Roosevelt's platform or personality appealed to you?

Porter: The golden voice, the vision. Here was the man who was brilliant, cultured, with the dedication to making life better for all of the American people. He use to say, "One-third of the nation ill fed, ill housed, ill clothed." That had been an accepted pattern. Now, whatever our problems are today, they're not of the grinding poverty of children working for 25¢ an hour, people in the fields working for low wages, the labor unions fighting so hard to get better working conditions.

Morris: Had you some knowledge of some of the things that Roosevelt was talking about nationally as they applied here in San Francisco?

Porter: Yes. Of course, we had the WPA in those days, and your conservative

Porter: Republican friends called you up and said: It's a disgrace that you support that Roosevelt, the WPA. I have seen a man leaning on a hoe for half an hour. [Laughter]

Then there was Harry Hopkins who said: Put them to work in the things they can do. Let the artists paint. This was included in the WPA.

Morris: Did you have any contact with or acquaintance with Alexander Meiklejohn when he was in San Francisco in the late thirties?

Porter: Mrs. Meiklejohn lives here. She wouldn't remember me, but in the thirties they were friends of the Bruce Porters, and I met them there.

Morris: Did you attend any of his social science classes? I understand they got a number of people involved in community affairs.

Porter: No.

Democratic Women's Forum

Morris: I was wondering when you first had some contact with the Democratic party organization.

Porter: In 1932, someone invited me to a meeting of the Democratic Women's Forum. I can't remember who the honored guest was. It was an important Washington person, but not Francis Perkins. Then I was asked to join it, and then I became a director. This was a woman's group who had speakers of importance. I don't think there were more than a couple of hundred members, with maybe fifty attending the meetings.

I do remember there was a Republican woman who came to some of the meetings, and she was very anxious to get the one-for-one legislation on the state ballot. That meant on the State Central Committee, to which each legislator then made three appointments, and they used to appoint three men. But this legislation meant that they had to appoint one woman, one man, one woman. If the assemblyman was a man, then he appointed a woman, a man and a woman.

But she asked the Forum's support. The Democratic women and the Republican women were together on this legislation.

Morris: Who were the women that you remember most in the Democratic Women's Forum?

Porter: Mrs. E. S. Heller financially (I found later) supported it. There was a Miss Carlisle Tomlinson, I think, who was the secretary, who kept it together. The first president I remember was Mrs. Mae Chapman, who had been head of the group of women that had worked during the war to keep a canteen open, and later had raised enough money to build the Women's City Club.

Morris: Was the Forum primarily an idea and social and educational group, or did you get involved in fund-raising and campaigning?

Porter: Really it was social and educational. But I remember we did have study groups, and I remember analysing the AAA (the Agricultural Adjustment Administration), writing a long paper on it--a stupendous amount of work. My sister-in-law's son was a large agriculturalist with some concern up in the Sacramento Valley; I mean it was a huge thing. All of the agriculturalists objected to the Agricultural Adjustment Act. My sister-in-law said to him: You really don't understand it, Arnold. Just ask Julia; she'll explain it. [Laughter]

Of course, it was going to cost them money, and Arnold wasn't the least bit interested.

Morris: Was he a grower?

Porter: Yes. He'd been in charge of the Lake Pontchartrain development in New Orleans. He was a very nice person who took this quietly, but was not convinced.

The Forum would discuss Roosevelt's program; we were for his program. It wasn't on the level that it is now--who are you going to stand behind to get elected, or who are you going to get to support you so you can get elected.

In that era, women had household help--everybody in the upper down to the middle income group. Women were free; there were all sorts of forums and things that started at ten in the morning. Women had leisure that they don't have now because most women have to handle the running of their houses and most of them have jobs.

Morris: Is Mrs. E. S. Heller--is that Ellie Heller?

Porter: No, that's her mother-in-law. A woman of very strong character. Do you know Ellie Heller?

Morris: Only by reputation. Was she part of this Democratic Women's Forum?

Porter: No. She didn't participate really until '44. Ed Heller was always a delegate to the National Convention because he was a prominent Democrat, and I'm sure Ellie went to all of the conventions. In

Porter: 1944, she was made national committeewoman and she became very active.

Another person about whom we used to say: Why, is it possible that she's a Democrat?! was Mrs. Billie Johnston who owned the Palace Hotel. She had been Janet Newman, and was Sharon's granddaughter.

Morris: How about Lucretia Grady?

Porter: Well, Lucretia was in in '32, too.

Morris: In Roosevelt's first campaign. Was Lucretia Grady also active in the Women's Forum?

Porter: In Berkeley they had some kind of activity which she led.

Morris: There is now a Democratic Women's Forum, but it's considerably involved in actual campaigning and fund-raising and endorsing candidates. Was there any work at all on elections?

Porter: It seems to me that there wasn't a problem, but that we supported the Democratic candidate. And yes, in '32, they did have a neighborhood headquarters. I have a southern friend who also belonged to the Democratic Women's Forum--the great-granddaughter of the first governor of Virginia. Very intelligent, and a hereditary Democrat. I remember her saying: I have never known of so much fuss and feathers as sitting in those headquarters where we accomplish nothing.

But they did have Democratic headquarters where people came in and picked up brochures.

Morris: But they weren't very active.

Porter: They didn't do the "getting out the vote" in those days. It wasn't down to earth. And yet, I do remember people telling--and this is on the men's side--of the men going from door-to-door with the brochure of the candidate. The candidate did not have time to do this, but there were a number of people--maybe a dozen people--to help (to take an assembly district is tremendous). So the person would ring the doorbell; the candidate would do some things but he couldn't do all of it, so his assistants would ring a doorbell. If the door was open, they would say: I am here asking that you support Judge So-and-so. I am so sorry that you were not at home when he called. [Laughter]

The man I'm thinking of is a federal judge, now.

Morris: How about 1938, when Culbert Olson was running for governor? What kind of involvement did you get into?

Porter: You see, I was League of Women Voters president, and because I was chosen as the one person acceptable to the conservatives and the liberals, I bent over backwards not to have a political involvement. So I was not involved from '38 to '41.

Working with National Committeewoman Helen Gahagan Douglas
and Other Leading Democrats

Porter: When Helen Gahagan asked me to be Northern California chairman in 1940, I refused because I said I did not wish the League to think I used it for political purposes because, in that era, being a League president was an accolade through the whole country. Gladys Tillett, vice chairman of the Democratic party, had been League president in North Carolina and she greeted me with open arms because of the League presidency.

So Helen waited a year, and she came back and asked me to be chairman, which I accepted.

Morris: The first time she asked you, did you have any advance warning that somebody was likely to ask you that?

Porter: [Pause] I don't remember whether Mrs. Heller called me; I'm not sure.

Morris: Is this the elder Mrs. Heller?

Porter: Yes, who really was the person in the era when it was hard to get people, who was a staunch Democrat and wanted women to be involved.

Morris: Did you and she ever talk about this?

Porter: Well, when I did accept the place, I talked with her, with Helen, with the head of the State Central Committee, and Mrs. Heller said to me: It won't take very much of your time, and I will support your office and supply you with the best secretary money will buy.

Well, [laughter] I found I was fascinated with it; it took all of my time.

Morris: Who was the head of the Central Committee at that point?

Porter: William Malone, who was a law partner of Raymond Sullivan, who is one of the state supreme court justices.

Morris: Was that a professional job? In other words, being head of the central committee--he was chairman rather than being the executive?

Porter: If you want to interview a man on politics, he knows more than anybody west of Chicago. He was the man who could pick up the telephone and reach the White House just like that. Now, whether he would feel like disclosing all the intricacies, I don't know.

Morris: We do hope to interview him, and I hope he will be willing to talk about the intricacies in the process.

Porter: I told you, didn't I, shortly after I was appointed, I met Ed Flynn when he came here. He was head of the Democratic party, and he had been boasting of this new leader in California in some place in Arizona, so one of the newspapermen told me. Having been League of Women Voters-trained, when I met him, I told him that I didn't believe in patronage [laughter]; so you know what the Democratic party got. They had to educate me, too, to say I believed in it only for qualified people.

Morris: I see. Was patronage a big issue in 1941?

Porter: I flew south with Bob Kenny, after he had been attorney general, and after he'd run for governor--and he told me that he had more clients come to him when he had just graduated from Stanford than he had after he'd been defeated as the candidate for governor--and he was considered one of the fine legal minds. But this is what political defeat does.

I remember him saying to me: I have never known of anybody to handle so much patronage as Bill Malone with so few beefs.

And, of course, you know that it's true; there's patronage now. Whether it's Reagan or Brown, there is patronage.

Morris: What's the party definition of patronage?

Porter: Now, in San Francisco, which is local, there really isn't patronage, or there's very little, because most things are civil service. But patronage means: if you are appointed a judge, for instance--and you have to be good--there are numerous lawyers with the same knowledge, the same amount of wisdom. So you don't get appointed a judge unless you are known to the governor.

Agnes O'Brien Smith, who's a local judge, was telling me that federally they are now appointing one Democrat and one Republican. In my era, they were all Democrats if the White House was Democratic. In the Eisenhower administration, they were all Republicans.

Morris: In other words, every governor and every President has certain appointments that he must make as part of his job?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: So that patronage involves different kinds of appointments at different levels. Did the Women's Division and the State Central Committee get involved at all in recommendations for appointments and things like that?

Porter: We've come a long way! [Laughter] Everybody's in the act now. No, it was only the top level people. In the forties, when we had the OPA, that was when the University of California--Boalt Hall--had all their bright lawyers in the OPA. They split right down the middle, and there was this terrific battle to get rid of Barbara Armstrong, which they eventually did.

Morris: Was it the Republican people in the OPA organization who wanted her out?

Porter: No, no, not at all. [Laughter] The greatest fights can occur on the nuances of reform or the way you're going to administer.

Morris: I see. That's a good point.

Porter: Yes, and the interpretation.

Morris: What was the issue?

Porter: There used to be rent control. I remember Barbara telling with glee about a little man who came in to say to her: My landlord's a 'bastick.' [Laughter]

There was rent control, there was food rationing. I remember having a dinner, I think, it was either for Gladys Tillett or Helen, and all these women heads of the Labor Department, Social Security, and other agencies coming and bringing me their rationing stamps. Food stamps were that important.

Morris: This was the ration coupons during World War II?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Let me back up a minute. Did you and your husband talk about whether or not you should take on this job with the Women's Division?

Porter: Yes, and I didn't want to do it because I wanted to study and go into Chinatown, buy things, continue to study Chinese porcelains.

Porter: Also, I had done a big job very successfully with the League, and I remember saying to my husband: I think I can do it, but I've worked with every prima donna in San Francisco, and I don't know if I could work with a real prima donna.

And he said to me--that was the era of luncheons and teas--You're bored with luncheons and teas; you won't go to them. You have the time--try it. And if you don't like it, you can resign.

Politics is something that is a chemical thing for some people, and I was bitten. I remember Helen saying to me, once we were talking about it: I've done everything in the theater; I've known the most wonderful people. But I've never known real satisfaction until I got into politics.

Morris: What do you think it is about politics that makes it particularly satisfying?

Porter: After all, the ultimate thing is the governing of your country in the way you hope to see it governed, the way you hope it will move. If you care terribly about that and are working with these people who are accomplishing a definite thing or being defeated in a definite thing, it's living. It's participation in life to a very full degree.

Morris: What did you mean about working with prima donnas?

Porter: Helen was a great prima donna--didn't you know--and she was a fine singer in these light operas. She'd been in "The Cat and the Fiddle" and I don't know how many other things; she was really known as a singer. I think you have seen the picture taken with Helen when I was president of the League of Women Voters, haven't you? [See illustration page]

Morris: Lovely.

Porter: She was invited to speak at the League because she was defending the migrants. She went to the legislators, picked up assemblymen in her car and said: Come out and see the conditions under which they are working.

She was Helen Gahagan; she didn't use the Douglas. Her speech was "We Have the Migrants--What Are We Going To Do About Them?"

Morris: Do you recall how her speech was received by the San Francisco League?

Porter: Very well. Helen always was a very impressive person. She was an actress and she also had a very good mind and imagination and the

Porter: ability to express herself.

Morris: Are there difficulties with dealing with a prima donna?

Porter: I adored her; chemically, we were right. She said to me when I took the position: You take the North, I'll take the South.

The telegram that you saw among the papers was signed by her name (although written by me) because she was national committee-woman and her prestige was greater than mine as state chairman.

Morris: She wasn't yet in Congress, was she?

Porter: No.

Organizing Women in Forty-eight Counties

Morris: What was your charge as head of the Northern California Women's Division?

Porter: To organize the women. I did finally get chairmen for the forty-eight northern counties, but it was very difficult. I was helped by the men--some of them--who had to travel for various reasons, who would say: Mrs. So-and-So is a Democrat; she's a leader in Mendocino city. Why don't you write her a letter? She might make a good chairman.

Then that person was supposed to organize the women in her county. It was much more difficult to do then than it is now.

Morris: Why was that?

Porter: People didn't want to give the time to it then. I think television might have something to do with the change--a whole national involvement with many things, with government. People see on television the President, they see governors, they see congressmen, they see issues being brought out. In the days when people just had newspapers or listened to the radio, it wasn't the same at all. A great deal of radio was given over to entertainment.

Morris: Did you ever get the chairmen of all these counties together statewide?

Porter: They were supposed to come to the state convention in Sacramento. Most of them did, and some didn't because of some other commitments.

Morris: Did you and Helen compare notes at all about the differences between the North and the South in California?

Porter: We seemed to have the same problems [laughter] in the North and in the South. I remember at one stage the Young Democrats were a handful; they had a great many ideas, and they were very difficult. I remember Helen sailing into them, telling them what a detriment they were to the party. [Laughter] They probably were opposing some legislation that we thought was important.

Morris: In other words, they differed with the official Democratic organization.

Porter: Yes. The Young Democrats and the Young Republicans I think have always been sort of a headache. And they are the leaders of tomorrow.

Morris: They really tend to be the ones who--?

Porter: Phil Burton was a Young Democrat. The rest of the Young Democrats did not like him and they opposed him. But he stayed, and he ran for the assembly against an incumbent Democrat, who really may not have been as good as he. But there was this outrage in the party that he should have challenged a fellow Democrat. So the assemblyman died before the election, and the Democrats still endorsed the man who died. [Laughter] And elected him.

Morris: Who was that?

Porter: Mr. Clifford Berry.

[Tape 3 begins]

Porter: It wasn't until later that I got involved in the envelope addressing things.

Morris: Your job was primarily recruiting more women into the organization?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Had some of these counties and communities that you made contact with, had they had a Democratic women's organization before?

Porter: Nothing was done on the scale that I did it. I think some women did participate. There was a woman in Mendocino whose name was Nellie Corbett who was very active.

Morris: Anybody else you can think of?*

Porter: Of course, the reason I came in was because of the battle with Berkeley and Alameda County.

Morris: Tell me about that.

Porter: Well, one of the leading ladies in the Democratic party [laughter], the wife of a professor at the University, slapped another lady in the face in Sacramento.

Morris: Physically?! Good heavens.

Porter: Yes. So there was all of this to-do to get the right kind of leadership. And Helen went in. She didn't ask these women what they wanted; she decided that I had this community position, I had this family position, that I had a record of following through on what I did, and that she wanted me.

Morris: In other words, she picked you; it wasn't that a group of people mulled over various possibilities and decided on you. That's very flattering. So you went over to Alameda County to make the peace between these ladies?

Porter: Well, I had known these ladies, but I think it was Lucretia Grady, who always came back and kept her hand on things in Alameda County.

Morris: In other words, she kept her contact both in the East Bay and San Francisco?

Porter: And she kept in touch from Washington. Henry Grady was in Washington as undersecretary of state at that time. I think it was she who recommended the chairman over there, and I appointed the chairman.

Morris: Did you get involved in making speeches and organizing public meetings?

Porter: Oh, yes. I remember there was some kind of a marine school for

*Lila Orme, noted Mrs. Porter on the transcript, who she and Ellie Heller appointed Congressional Chairman in 1944. Added Mrs. Porter: I recently received a note from her thanking me for appointing her saying she had the most stimulating experience of her life through active leadership and participation in politics.

Porter: young officers. There was the Sun Ship here on which there was a graduation, and I was asked to speak extemporaneously. [Laughter] I remembered more then about John Paul Jones than I do today.

Morris: Good for you!

Porter: I remember my husband was so proud when there would be extra things (and I don't know whether I kept the clippings). The press used to call and say: What is your view on this as a Democratic woman? (something that was nonpolitical but of importance).

Travels and Issues

Morris: Did your husband travel with you on these speech-making and ceremonial things?

Porter: When I accepted the Northern California chairmanship, I did it with the understanding that I would not travel; my husband couldn't, and I wasn't going to leave him alone. Well, things reached the stage that he urged me to travel, because traveling is really mandatory in politics.

Morris: Why is that?

Porter: Because you have to get into the counties. The key person has to go from time to time into the smaller counties. I remember during the war [World War II] there was a meeting in Stockton--it used to be important to the county organizations to have the Northern chairman there, and I had accepted this invitation to speak. People in Stockton, or the smaller counties--maybe Stockton is tremendously important now in Sacramento; but San Francisco was at that time the most important place--they wanted the chairman, and when you said you'd come, they set up a meeting and sold tickets and had a luncheon. If you didn't appear, it was really very bad.

I remember going to Stockton and my husband mimicking me later, in which he would say: I shall go to Stockton. [Laughter]

I had a temperature of about 102°. I went to Stockton and I made my speech, and I almost passed out on the train coming back. I was met by my husband and put to bed.

[Interruption]

I remember one trip, while Bob Kenny was attorney general and Earl Warren was governor. In the Democratic party the attorney general, the national committeewoman, the state head (Bill Malone)

Porter: and the Northern California chairman went up to the Oregon line and we went as far south as Bakersfield campaigning for Roosevelt in 1944. Meetings were set up for us.

It was very amusing because, in the attorney general's car, we would keep passing the governor's car. The difference between us and the Republicans was the chauffeur of our car always dined with us and had drinks with us. The Republican chauffeur seemed to be set apart. But up and down the state those two cars went, despite the restrictions of gas rationing.

Morris: That's a marvelous picture--how much simpler it sounds! You said you went to places like Stockton and they had a luncheon and sold tickets; so that, in effect, your going around assisted in local fund-raising.

Porter: Well, really, in those days they only charged about the cost of things. It was much more difficult to raise money. People didn't have as much money. You worried about whether you'd sell enough tickets for a luncheon to pay the cost of the luncheon to you.

I think fund-raising was done on the higher level.

Morris: Were there many women making contributions themselves directly?

Porter: I told you the story of Old Boss Murphy of New York saying to Frances Perkins, who wanted his support on her child labor bill, or interest, and he said: Yes, I'll support it; you have got many votes.

Now this was a very practical thing, that one believed in supporting something that was getting votes, and political leaders were very aware of who had the votes.

Of course, Mrs. Roosevelt did make a tremendous impression for women because, although many people hated her, millions adored her.

Morris: What did they dislike about her?

Porter: Well, she wanted to push civil rights legislation--all the things the conservatives disliked the liberals for.

Morris: I wonder if, in your going out meeting with groups around the state, this gave you a way to assess what people's concerns were.

Porter: The concerns were similar. The concerns were jobs, getting legislation which we take for granted, which was undreamed of. Medicare--you'd mention it to a doctor friend, and he'd leave your house.

Morris: What about things like water? I was thinking of the Northern California counties where the Central Valley Project was located. Was that something that would involve the women's organizations?

Porter: The 160-acre limitation, which was almost perennial, used to come up. Now we don't hear of it anymore. But I think Sheridan Downey's brother, a very brilliant lawyer, had quite a role in trying to keep the limitation. Does anybody hear about it anymore?

Morris: Yes. It's more related to further south in the Central Valley now; it's come up again in terms of access to irrigation water from federal dams. When you were chairman of the Northern California Division, you said forty-eight counties; that's geographically the giant portion of the state.

Porter: But all the population is in the other ten.

Morris: Southern California was already the population center?

Porter: I doubt to the extent it is now. People make the state: If you want to be governor, go and live in Los Angeles.

You notice that young Brown [Edmund G., Jr.] established his residence there; his father was Northern California.

IV DEMOCRATIC STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

1941: Malone v. Reilly for Chairman

Morris: Did being Northern California chairman make you automatically a part of either the County Central Committee or the State Central Committee?

Porter: I was a State Central Committee member. I never was on the County Central Committee. Bill Malone was chairman of the County Central Committee, I think, all of the time he held other offices; he was the powerful Democrat. But I didn't go to County Central Committee meetings until later on. There was a wild battle on who should be chairman, and there was an effort to unseat Bill Malone by a man whose name was Delaney. As I remember, it was unsuccessful.

Morris: I have, from the newspaper clippings, reports of a struggle in 1942 when George Reilly--

Porter: That was Reilly running for mayor. Malone said: Locally we are nonpartisan; there isn't a runoff between the Democrats and the Republicans.

They had this battle in Sacramento where George Reilly defeated Bill Malone. So Reilly ran for mayor of San Francisco and Roger Lapham ran against him. And Bill Malone and the top Democrats, including Julia Porter, supported Roger Lapham.

Morris: I wondered if it had a local aspect. The newspapers reported some hints of unsavory connections between Reilly's supporters in terms of the Board of Equalization seat which he then had, and Culbert Olson's campaign for reelection as governor. Do you recall that part of it?

Porter: I recall a wonderful fight in Sacramento at the state convention, when Catherine Bauer Wurster was my vice-chairman. I had arrived by an earlier train (think of talking of trains!) and was at the

Porter: Senator Hotel. There was a labor leader there; he was head of the building trades. He was for Reilly. We all would try to convert each other. Catherine arrived and checked into her room and then called me and said: What's happened, Julia? (She was busy with housing.) She said: I saw Sandy Watchman and he said, 'Keep cam, Catherine, keep cam.' (He was a Scotsman.) [Laughter]

So there was this very deep feeling. The convention was strung out, and many of the delegates finally got tired and went home. You know, an extra day's expense sometimes is plenty.

People on our side hadn't in the North been careful to get the delegate proxies. I mean, this was one of the most tense and interesting things I ever went through, with the Reilly people on this side and the Malone people glaring at them, and the roll call vote. So they would go Reilly, Reilly, Malone, Malone, Reilly. Then it began to be Malone proxy Helen Gahagan Douglas; she had proxies from the south. Helen was a most astute politician.

Morris: This is at the very end, after the convention was extended?

Porter: Yes. And then Reilly had the votes and became the state chairman. I resigned, because I did not wish to serve with Reilly.

Morris: And Catherine Wurster resigned.

Porter: Yes. We both did.

Morris: Then two days later, the woman who was appointed to take over also resigned.

Porter: Yes. I remember Reilly writing to Helen Gahagan Douglas that he objected to my participation in some political matter; I don't remember what it was. So Helen called me and said she was writing to him to tell him she was standing behind me. Poor Mr. Reilly got this letter acknowledging his letter and saying: Mrs. Porter is my personal representative out in California.

Morris: Why did Mr. Reilly want to be mayor if he was already on the Board of Equalization?

Porter: Being the mayor of San Francisco is an honor and an important thing.

Morris: Had the liquor licensing question already become a troublesome one at the state level?

Porter: Yes. There was a great deal of gossip at the time. I was told about the proof that would be brought up in the campaign, which never was.

Morris: If Mr. Reilly and Mr. Malone were both from San Francisco, had they worked together on political things before?

Porter: I think so. I don't know, but I'm sure that Mr. Malone didn't oppose Mr. Reilly running for the Board of Equalization. But then, in politics, as a young professional woman said to me: You're friends today, you're enemies tomorrow. Why do they insist on making these speeches?

She was talking about the rift recently between the mayor and the board of supervisors.

Now, look, here is a definite example. My friend, Agnes O'Brien Smith, was an attorney in the city attorney's office, and I tried so hard to have Pat Brown appoint her to one of the vacancies on the bench. She was highly qualified; she was a woman (there were very few women). And he didn't do it. But when Janet Aiken, who'd been appointed by I guess Reagan, decided to seek the superior court, Agnes ran for the municipal court, and Terry Francois (who is black and a lawyer and a supervisor) ran against her. He had the support of everybody. Agnes worked hard, is very able, and had a great many friends.

I remember Pat Lynch and I spending a long time on the telephone lining up people who would support Agnes, giving help the way you do in a campaign, and trying to raise money. I came in to the Planning Commission one day, and Hector Rueda (who is a Guatemalan and a labor leader, and a very nice man, very good commissioner) said to me: What do you mean by not being for Terry?

I said: Look, he's a wonderful supervisor; keep him where he is. I'm for Agnes for judge.

I mean, I wasn't supporting Terry Francois then. The next time he ran, Terry wrote me a letter and said: Will you have lunch? Then he said: Will you support me?

I said: Of course. But here it was, I wasn't speaking to him on the judgeship; I was backing him later for supervisor and I'm backing him this time. In politics there are changes.

Now, I had a young assistant come in to help professionally, and she said to me: Julia, tell me about the Democratic party. I said: Well, I don't know what to say, other than there are many mansions in the Democratic party.

I think that's true now. This person is doing something over here, that person is doing something very different.

Morris: Is this particular to the Democratic party, or have you observed it also in the Republican?

Porter: I imagine it happens in the Republican party. My husband had a relative who was a very important Republican. There was one thing-- we could always have dinner and relax and agree that there was no place in the world as bad as Southern California, Republican or Democratic. [Laughter]

1942 Statewide Elections

Morris: Did this fight over the chairmanship of the Central Committee have an effect on the 1942 statewide elections?

Porter: A great deal. It defeated Olson. The papers were anti-Olson. He did many strange things; I think he was ill.

Morris: Well, there were questions about his appointments.

Porter: You can win an office and then find that you haven't strong support. Mr. Reilly couldn't deliver.

Morris: He couldn't deliver the San Francisco vote for Olson?

Porter: No, he couldn't deliver the others either.

Morris: Because there had been this difference of opinion? The Central Committee itself was divided?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: I wonder if it had anything to do with either Earl Warren's own organizational strength, or whether Democrats in general thought he'd be a better governor.

Porter: I think Democrats were disenchanted with Olson. If you read the record, you can realize how hard it became to support him.

Morris: Didn't he attempt to introduce and get passed legislation that was similar to the kinds of things Mr. Roosevelt was after--health care and pensions?

Porter: Well, look, I don't know about that, but I know that there were questions about things such as the qualifications of the head of the Relief Administration, although these things didn't seem to be major; we had them in Washington. He was a liberal--but his policies were not supported.

[Tape turned over]

Morris: In the '42 campaign, World War II had already begun, and one of the issues was the civil defense in the state. Do you recall charges that Olson was not administering that properly?

Porter: I don't remember. I came in in '41 and I was in when Pearl Harbor happened. Now, in San Francisco we were under the blackout, and as I remember, people accepted all of these conditions.

Morris: Were you aware at all of Earl Warren as attorney general? His offices were here in San Francisco, weren't they, the state offices?

Porter: He always had an extraordinarily good reputation. He was highly respected. We had crossfiling, and I think on the attorney general thing, that he had very little difficulty. We knew when he opposed Olson, who had such bad publicity, that the chances of Warren winning were very great.

Morris: Did the Central Committee then put its efforts into Congress and the legislative elections?

Porter: I'm sure they did. If I remember--let me see, who was the congressman? We had two districts. There was a man whose name was Cosgrove in the Mission who was reelected until Jack Shelley, maybe in the late forties, opposed him. On this side of town, Frank Havenner was elected, but I don't know just when. Also Jim Rolph served.

Morris: I came across a note that you supported Havenner in 1947.

Porter: Well, I'd supported him--he was a liberal, intelligent Democrat.

Morris: If you resigned and Catherine Bauer resigned, and then the lady who took over resigned, what happened to the Women's Division for the 1942 election campaign?

Porter: I think the women dispersed as a division. I know I was active as an individual and have been often in many campaigns.

Morris: Did you have any contact with the Republican women's organization? Did Mr. Warren have a Republican women's division?

Porter: Yes. I don't know how they did it, but Mildred Prince was always one of his leading people.

Morris: Did you know her well enough to talk about how Republican women's organizations ran?

Porter: We used to sit down and bare our souls about how stupidly politics was run. [Laughter] We were absolutely in accord. I liked her very much and admired her, and she liked me. If you are in politics, you do wonder from time to time why there is fuss and feathers about certain things.

Morris: Which things particularly?

Porter: Maybe the way a campaign is run, what a candidate says. You know the people who support a candidate usually disapprove of what he's done on this occasion and that occasion.

Morris: That's kind of inevitable if you have a representative kind of government, isn't it?

Porter: But it doesn't help when the campaign is going on--That was a very bad thing. Why did he do that? or: Why wasn't he good on this?

Morris: After the campaign was over, and Mr. Olson was not reelected, did you go back into the organization as chairman?

Porter: I went back in 1944, I think, as Northern California chairman, after the Chicago convention. Then, after that--I think this is right--I was county chairman of the Women's Division.

Morris: Did you stay on the Central Committee?

Porter: Oh, yes. That really doesn't mean a tremendous amount, other than at convention time. The county central committee in those days didn't meet twice a year.

Women's Roles

Morris: Could you explain to me the difference between a county central committee and the State Central Committee?

Porter: The county central committee is elected. On the State Central Committee, the assemblymen and the state senators are delegates, and they have three appointments. There have to be an equal number of men and women. After that law was passed, sometime in the thirties, the assemblyman would appoint--supposing Mr. So-and-So was a well known lawyer and they didn't have the man's place, so they'd appoint Mrs. So-and-So. He'd go to Sacramento and take her, or use her proxy, but she didn't speak.

Porter: When I was chairman and was being very active, there was a very well known lawyer whose wife was designated, whom I knew, who really didn't care much about politics but was a pleasant wife and went along. There was something I wanted a motion on, and I said: Will you move so-and-so, and I'll second it, which she did.

Her husband went to her and said: What did you ever do that for?! And she said: Mrs. Porter told me to. [Laughter]

Morris: Did you ever settle down and read Robert's Rules of Order or did you learn the procedures as you went along?

Porter: No. Well, somebody was there to keep us straight on Robert's Rules of Order.

Morris: But the parliamentary procedures--I gather that it's quite important who makes the motion and what form your motions get made in. Do you learn this as you go along?

Porter: I think you learn it by osmosis.

Morris: But, in general, many of the women who went to these meetings did their husbands' bidding?

Porter: Yes, or the husband had a proxy.

Morris: Perhaps for a woman delegate.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: The State Central Committee has a convention every two years?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: So in '43, there was another convention. Did Mr. Reilly oppose Bill Malone as chairman again?

Porter: I don't know whether Bill ran; I guess he did.

Morris: Yes, because he's back as chairman again.

Porter: Yes, because if I was there, he was there; he was the person who had helped get me into politics, who backed me after I was there.

He used to say, when there were a lot of men around and women, if some man would come and complain about the women, he'd say: You leave those women alone; they know what they're doing.

Morris: How did he come to this opinion?

- Porter: Maybe like the Porters he was a women's libber. [Laughter]
- Morris: You've worked with him in politics for thirty years. Did you ever talk about women as a category?
- Porter: No. I think he very definitely felt that women were individuals. He wasn't specially supporting you because you were a woman but because you were an individual doing a good job, and it was a good thing to have some women there.
- Morris: Was his wife active in politics at all?
- Porter: She bore it. [Laughter] She's a wonderful person. She went to all of these meetings and I'm sure got very exhausted, with having to listen and all that. She was a very graceful and very intelligent woman.
- Morris: But politics was not particularly her thing.
- Porter: I think Bill would have felt that a husband and wife both didn't get in.

Party Loyalty and Leadership

- Morris: It's about at this point that the newspapers begin to comment about the Heller-Malone team in political affairs. I wondered if that was Ed Heller or Ellie Heller?
- Porter: It's Ed Heller. His mother told me she always had been a Democrat. Her father had been a Democrat. That she remembered her father having these big gatherings for all of the Democrats, and the barrels of beer being rolled onto the lawn and the food being supplied.
- Morris: That really is the good old days. She brought her son up, then, to think of politics and public affairs as important. So they inherited the Democratic party. Did Ed Heller grow up here in San Francisco?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: Was he an attorney?
- Porter: No. I don't know whether he was a banker or financier.
- Morris: How did he and Bill Malone come to be thought of as a team?

Porter: I suppose because Bill Malone was the organization person. He was perhaps the finest political mind west of Chicago. Ed Heller was an interested person and a wealthy person.

Morris: When you say organizational mind, do you mean in terms of how to get more people to register as Democrats?

Porter: Yes. How do you get more people to be active and support you and what you want.

Morris: What kinds of things particularly did he--

Porter: Doing what we could for the Roosevelt program, which we started with; then supporting Truman.

Morris: Was supporting Truman a controversial thing here in California?

Porter: Yes. After Roosevelt so caught the imagination--you are too young to remember, aren't you?

Morris: Not really. I remember the tag end of the Roosevelt administration and being taken out in the streets to see him come by, and that kind of thing.

Porter: Roosevelt did I think capture the imagination as no other President has. Kennedy captured it, but in a superficial way compared to Roosevelt. Roosevelt was almost a god. Well, when you succeed an almost-god, suddenly--I think the first reaction was everybody was so happy Truman was there, that we still were going on without Roosevelt; there were a large percentage of the American people who couldn't think of going on without Roosevelt. Even after four terms.

Then the very extreme Roosevelt people became very critical of Truman. So in the '48 campaign, to get people who'd been leaders before to function was impossible in many cases.

Ben Duniway, who is now a federal judge, and I were co-chairmen in San Francisco. George T. Davis was state chairman for Truman. I don't know who was with him. Most of us didn't expect to win. I remember on election day the man who was the professional person heading the office, Harold McGrath, saying that Mike, the newsman downstairs in the building, had said to him when he came in: I'm as drunk as the Ten Commandments, and Truman ain't no cinch either.

We all just shuddered; Truman was no cinch.

There was a luncheon for Alben Barkley, who was running for vice-president, at the Commonwealth Club, where the audience was so small it was deplorable. This was because people had made up their

Porter: minds that Truman couldn't possibly win. Then there were many people in politics who only wanted to be on the winning side. People would not contribute, but the day after Truman's election, we were swamped with belated contributions. [Laughter]

Morris: Isn't that interesting! Are they accepted?

Porter: In politics you're always having debts--for overhead. Somebody told me of a governor who still owed his campaign telephone bill-- [laughter]--in the thousands, from five or ten years ago.

[The conclusion of Interview II has become the beginning of Chapter V]

[Date of Interview III: 21 October 1975]

[Tape 4 begins]

Bill Malone and the Roosevelt Years

Morris: Was Bill Malone already a key person in the Democratic party when you became women's chairman?

Porter: He was Northern California chairman, which meant that the forty-eight counties of Northern California came under his jurisdiction. The national committeeman is supposed to be a powerful person, but Bill Malone was infinitely more powerful. He, with Helen Gahagan Douglas, recruited me.

Morris: Why do you feel that Bill Malone as a local leader was more important and more powerful than the national committeeman?

Porter: He was the leading Democrat in discussing Democratic party policies with the small group of top leaders in Washington. What I call an excess of democracy has really resulted in great confusion. At the present time, they have six or seven national committeemen and committeewomen.

But there was a strong program in those days. We supported the program. He was the person who could pick up the telephone and get to the White House; that meant one of the undersecretaries and sometimes even the President. He was the person who could directly talk to Ed Flynn, who was head of the national committee, or Jim Farley, in his day, that this was what California was doing, what kind of support they could expect.

Morris: How did Bill Malone build this kind of ties with national leaders?

Porter: I went into it for purely idealistic reasons. I adored Franklin Roosevelt; the generation that didn't know him was impoverished. I mean, the idealism, the golden voice, the ability [telephone rings, is ignored] to feel what the people wanted. I don't know whether you are aware that in 1932, when I first voted for Roosevelt, child labor was accepted in the country; collective bargaining was talked about but it hadn't become an actual thing; and Medicare was something that was almost verboten, even among many Democrats who didn't have the vision to see that these things we accept as a matter of course were going to be one day achieved.

Morris: Where did California stand in relation to the rest of the country in terms of its Democratic registration and in terms of the kind of acceptance that California ideas had in Washington?

Porter: We used to have crossfiling. I think there was a division between local, state, and national government. Many people who were dedicated to Franklin Roosevelt would not vote for a Democrat as governor. Culbert Olson was the first Democratic governor in forty years, and he was very maladroit in managing--[laughter]

Morris: That's a nice word.

Porter: --his program politically. Even if you have a good program, you cannot achieve it without support, and that is political.

Morris: Support in all the various divisions of your--

Porter: Well, get the majority of the people to go along with.

Morris: You said that Olson himself was maladroit as a leader; did California Democrats in general support his program?

Porter: I think the personality fights became so great that the program went by the wayside.

Morris: How large a group would you say was it that, with Mr. Malone, kept an eye on Democratic affairs?

Porter: [Pause] In these things, there is a chain of command. There is the top leader who has his lieutenants, and the lieutenants who have their lieutenants, and their lieutenants who have theirs, down the line. The man at the top can't know everybody, but he knows a great many, knows that the support is functioning, that there isn't dissension in the ranks.

Morris: In other words, if one of the, say, state committee leaders has a group of people that he confers with, he expects that what they tell him is based on each of them having checked with another group of people in their own particular area?

Porter: Well, you are doing different thinking now, because we were in the Roosevelt era, in which he was making the brave new world. He did the dreaming, which was opposed by conservative people. We were there supporting the things he believed in. I even ardently supported packing the Supreme Court, which I now know would have been a major mistake.

Morris: Was it thought of as packing the court in the thirties?

Porter: Yes, it was in the thirties, because I led a group in the League of Women Voters which were divided, but the majority were for Roosevelt.

Morris: What were the circumstances of that--do you remember? Did he put pressure on some of the justices to retire?

Porter: I cannot quite remember. I think it was mandatory to retire at a certain time, and whether he was adding additional justices, I've really forgotten. But I do know that there were admirers and supporters of Roosevelt in the League of Women Voters in San Francisco who voted for his court plan, which outraged even loyal Democratic Senators. I remember the president of the League telling me that the national League was shaken to its foundation by our recommendation. [Laughter] But there was a great deal of 'What Roosevelt said was right.'

I remember we used to rush home to listen to his radio speeches. His Franklin Field speech in Philadelphia, I think in '36, was one of the most dramatic speeches I have ever heard. In it he said, "And as the divine Dante has said, 'The sins of the warm-hearted are weighed in different scales from the sins of the cold-hearted.'" Now, what President ever brought the public in to the divine Dante? And Hayward Brown wrote an article saying, "The divine Dante won the day in Philadelphia."

Morris: That's lovely.

Porter: We were a nation divided; we were for Roosevelt or against him.

Morris: It was that strong.

Porter: Yes. It wasn't the maybe yes, maybe no indifference. I would say that maybe on President Ford you will hear Democrats discussing him-- He did this well, he did that well. Until the money problems of

Porter: New York City came up, I don't think there's been a very definite feeling that the Democrats would handle things differently. They might do it a little more excessively.

Morris: Nowadays both parties would be doing more or less the same thing?

Porter: Yes. Don't you feel that there's a great similarity?

Morris: What kind of effect did Mr. Roosevelt's idealism and the feelings about him have on state and county and city candidates, or politics in general?

Porter: Every Democratic candidate said he was for Roosevelt. To get on the Roosevelt train for a congressional candidate--to be seen there was worth thousands of votes.

Morris: Did Franklin Roosevelt come to California himself at all?

Porter: Yes, and I forgot to tell you that I (through some legerdemain unimportant people frequently end up in important seats)--I don't know how it happened, but I was seated on the platform when Roosevelt was campaigning in 1932. That was the meeting at which he fell; in Washington for years after, people would say: Were you there?

He slipped. His son Jimmy was always with him to help him. He had this great difficulty, which people didn't realize, with his braces and his crutches. On the way to the podium, one of the crutches slipped, and he fell and recovered himself just momentarily and went on with the speech.

Women in Key Positions

Porter: I had a friend who was--and in those days, women did have important jobs--she was Oscar Ewing's assistant. He was head of what was then called the Social Security. Her name was Mae Thompson Evans, and she told me about the time the Democratic Women's Club celebrated her birthday, and President Harry Truman came. It was not too long after Roosevelt's death, and she said it was a shock to know that you couldn't count on the President being in the White House anymore; you didn't know where he was.

Morris: This is Truman? He was likely to turn up anywhere.

Porter: Yes. Roosevelt was unable to move without great fanfare and great preparation.

Morris: Because of his personality, or because of the fact that he did have a handicap?

Porter: Oh, his handicap! He was dreadfully handicapped. He was handicapped from the waist down. People never seemed to dwell on that--I mean the people who were his supporters. There were very nasty Republican remarks.

Morris: How had you gotten to know Mae Thompson Evans?

Porter: Well, I was the key person here, and Gladys Tillett was the woman's head of the national committee. When these people would come here, she would ask them to get in touch with me, and I entertained them or had a group of women to meet them.

Morris: Mrs. Evans would come out here on Social Security business?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did you get involved at all in setting up meetings for her with people about Social Security?

Porter: No, purely having her meet people on the women's level.

Morris: Women in the Democratic party organization.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: So that when she came out here, there'd be a political friend side of it as well as the agency business?

Porter: This is the sort of thing that would happen. (This was during the war, and entertaining was a bit of a problem because of the food stamps and all.) I remember getting a telephone call from Gladys Tillett and Hick (Hick is Lenore Hickock who discovered Mrs. Roosevelt and said: This is going to be the greatest woman)--do you know about Lenore Hickock?

Morris: No, I don't; I'd like to hear that story.

Porter: She was the secretary to Gladys Tillett on the national committee. They were doing on the national level what I was trying to do on the state level--find and develop good leadership.

I received this telephone call, and they were very gay, saying: We're in the midst of a blizzard and we'll be in San Francisco in four days. So I said: Wonderful. How long will you be here?

Porter: I organized a reception for Gladys Tillett. Then I had a luncheon or a dinner--I don't know which--for her with about ten or twelve women leaders here. One of them was Jennie Matyas, who was the international vice-president of the Ladies Garment Workers Union [ILGWU], and was on the manpower board. Jennie was a Democrat; we always invited Jennie so Washington could see that California had women leaders in other fields.

Emily Huntington--do you remember what she was?

Morris: Yes. She was on the University faculty in the Economics Department.

Porter: Yes, and didn't she have some state appointment?

Morris: I don't recall whether it was a federal agency in California or whether it was the corresponding state agency.

Porter: I met her and Barbara Armstrong, who was a professor at Boalt Hall, and then Valeska Bary, who was Dick Neustadt's assistant [telephone rings, is ignored]; these were women of stature.

Morris: In the professions, as faculty people.

Porter: Yes. Of course, Valeska Bary was in government. Dick Neustadt was the regional head of Social Security and Valeska was his assistant.

Morris: Tell me about Hick and what made her aware of Eleanor Roosevelt's competence.

Porter: I think Hick was a newspaperwoman when she met Eleanor Roosevelt and thought she was a great person. She did so much to support Mrs. Roosevelt and to keep what she was doing in the public eye. Later she had Malvina Thompson help her, and Hick moved over to Gladys Tillett's office.

Morris: It was remarkable that Mrs. Roosevelt in a way developed her own independent career while her husband was President.

Porter: Yes. And he depended on her. She was peripatetic and mobile; he was immobilized. She went through the country and really got the grassroots feeling of people and what they wanted and what they were doing.

I remember when Mrs. Roosevelt came to San Francisco Catherine Bauer Wurster and I went to the airport to meet her. (Catherine was my assistant; that was because I had time to do the work and Catherine was busy with her profession.) We had an interview with her, which she mentioned in her column. Being mentioned in Mrs. Roosevelt's column was like getting into heaven. My phone kept ringing and ringing with messages of congratulation.

Porter: She was a lady of strong views. I remember Catherine asked her about integration and she said: You'll never have integration till you have it in housing.

And that is true to this day; we wouldn't have busing if we had integration in housing.

Morris: I'm curious if you remember what it was that she mentioned in her column about the meeting with you.

Porter: All I know, she said that she'd met with Mrs. Porter and Miss Bauer, Northern California leaders of the Democratic party. I'm afraid there were no words of wisdom.

Support for Women's Division Activities

Morris: Going back to Bill Malone and the group locally, do you recall who were the people he did work most closely with?

Porter: Ed Heller, Harold Berliner, Jim Smyth; there was a man named Neil Callahan who died early in the forties; and I think at one time Albert Chao, who was head of the Chinese Six Companies.

Morris: Were there any women in this group?

Porter: Ellie Heller and I were consulted.

Morris: This group was all, at one time or another, on the Central Committee?

Porter: I don't know.

Morris: How much advice or assistance did the Central Committee offer to the Women's Division in their activities?

Porter: Mr. Malone, having the Women's Division there, supported it in every way. I remember one of the minor functionaries being displeased at something the women were doing. I can hear Bill Malone saying: You leave those women alone. They know what they're doing! And those women carried out their own program.

Morris: How about assistance from national headquarters?

Porter: I did get assistance. I told you, didn't I, about the Barbara Armstrong problem?

Morris: Yes. I was thinking about ideas and materials for recruiting new leaders, like this Democratic Digest that you gave me.

Porter: This was published as a woman's organ till Adlai Stevenson became a candidate.

Every presidential candidate, or President, has a great deal to do with selecting who, or approving who, is the chairman of the national committee. Roosevelt had Farley and Ed Flynn. Truman had J. Howard McGrath (first he had Bob Hannegan, who was his close friend and who died). When Stevenson became the candidate, Steven Mitchell, a lawyer from Chicago, I think was chairman of his campaign. At all events, he was the choice for the national chairman.

Now, I think he tried to take the Digest over and make it a non-woman's thing; I don't know whether this was with a feeling that it would be easier for women if they were not segregated to achieve things. Of course, the result was they didn't achieve nearly as much. This really was a very good paper. Mitchell was the person who was responsible for the demise of the Digest which, of course, cost money to put out.

Morris: I was wondering about that.

Porter: Well, he probably had his priorities.

Morris: But you felt that the Digest was a useful thing for the Women's Division.

Porter: Yes, and we were not very happy to see it expire. But you see the thing that happened: when you're in, you're in; when you're out, you're out.

Thoughts on Patronage

Porter: We'd been in office for twenty years when Eisenhower came in and the Democrats were no longer in power. They were not achieving the things they could realize when they were there, because when you're not in power, you can't do very much; all you can do is to build up your organization to hope to get back.

Morris: Even though there usually is some kind of balance; there may be a Democratic President but Republicans are elected into the state houses.

Porter: Yes, but the state house is another thing. Patronage does play an important part in politics. In Washington, I don't know how many appointments, how many highly paid jobs there are in the higher

Porter: echelon, although men do give up much larger salaries to serve because they do want to serve their government. Whether they're Democrats or Republicans, they'd like to get their views and their programs made a real thing.

Now, in the state house, there are a tremendous number of appointments which are very lucrative. When you get to the lower level, people aren't giving up hundred-thousand dollar jobs to take thirty or forty thousand. Maybe they're leaving twenty or fifteen thousand dollar jobs to take thirty thousand. I don't know how many appointments there are in the State of California, but there are a great, great many. The governor has to make those appointments; I think usually the way it goes, whether it's my governor or the governor of the opposite party, he is trying to appoint people who will carry out his program.

When you come to the local level in San Francisco, there are a hundred and something commissionerships, which are largely prestige; nobody earns a living at them. Ninety-five percent of the employees are in civil service, where they remain indefinitely, until they retire, if they wish to stay there. So patronage I think on the local level is more a matter of a personality who has a program.

Ultimately the program may not be radically different but, in this state and nation, politics is a very real and practical thing.

Morris: Do the party organizations have a say in whether various people are qualified or otherwise would do a reasonable job in various appointments?

Porter: In the days when I was there, I remember Harry Truman saying no judgeships would be approved without the approval of the State Central Committee in California. There's always some independent person who may be very close to the candidate; he does have his personal friend that he will appoint, to the dismay of the organization.

I know that when Bill Malone was carrying the organization, he was more than careful to be sure his candidates were qualified; he wouldn't recommend an unqualified person. When it comes to qualifications and integrity, there are a number of people who have it and may be equal; but the person you know who's been part of your organization or who has been friendly to it is the person you're going to support.

Morris: Are there enough people seeking appointments that this gets to be a matter of some pressure on the local political leaders?

Porter: I don't think too many for the same post.

Political Finance

Morris: I came across mentions of Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners in your scrapbook, and I wondered how much of your time as Northern California chairman was involved with things like the Jefferson-Jackson dinner.

Porter: The Women's head always went; they frequently were seated at the speaker's table; that was I think the Central Committee. I think at one time I was made a vice-chairman. I am sure the national committeewoman was made a vice-chairman. But this was raising money (and big money) and the women did not at that time have access to big money.

The Bay Guardian has published a list of contributors to the supervisor candidates, and Diane Feinstein has had all of the \$500 contributions from the various men's groups that the men have. That would have been difficult then; only a personality could get it in the forties. Helen Gahagan Douglas got it.

Morris: Got big contributions.

Porter: She did, because she was elected.

Morris: Was that because of her own contacts from her days as an actress? In other words, did she do her own fund-raising?

Porter: I think she had help from the whole organization.

Morris: But women in general were not involved in soliciting the big contributions?

Porter: They did the smaller things, which they still are doing financially.

Morris: You mean the general semi-public fund-raising?

Porter: There were wealthy women. A person like Mrs. E. S. Heller. Like Harriet Blanding Goodrich (she married a Berkeley English professor), I remember calling her in the Stevenson campaign. We wanted money for a radio thing. I was vice-chairman of the local Stevenson committee. So I called her and she said: Let me see what you can do and I'll tell you how much I can help.

Morris: She waited to see what you did with other people and then she came in.

Porter: This was eight o'clock in the evening and we had to have the money in by midnight to buy the time (I think it was radio in those days). John Grady, Lucretia's son, who had given his heart to Stevenson,

Porter: took one list and I took the other. We went down the list saying: We need the money for this special project. Then I called her back and said: We have so much money.

She said: Aren't you wonderful! I will give you--I don't know whether it was five hundred or a thousand dollars. There were not many women who could do that, and there were dozens of men. Also, I suppose women do not spend their money as freely as men or give it as freely, although many, many women have a great deal of money.

Morris: Yes, economic studies do report that in the United States women control a majority of the money. But you're saying that you don't think that women generally dispose of their own money.

Porter: No, they don't give it the way men do. If you would look at the list of contributions for the supervisors just published, you'd be amazed at the way men give money away. [Laughter]

Morris: How many of those gifts that are listed under a man's name do you suppose come from joint funds or from the woman's money that she's either inherited or made through her own career?

Porter: I think most of them come from the money the men made. I mean, the people who control the money are usually widows.

Morris: And widows as a group don't get into politics?

Porter: No, they just don't give. I mean, they don't give. A man buys a table at \$100 a place for a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner; a widow buys one ticket or two.

Morris: Have you ever talked to anybody, or thought about it yourself, as to why this might be? Why women as a group don't give?

Porter: I would say offhand, they haven't earned it; they don't know that you can earn it and use it. It's something handed over to them and they're afraid of losing it.

Morris: I should think it would be much easier to give away somebody else's money.

Porter: But people don't.

Morris: That's an interesting idea; worth following up, I think. Do you suppose if more women put more money into political campaigns and causes, it might have an effect either on women's success as candidates or women in policy positions?

Porter: Certainly, because money is necessary to run campaigns. Money is unfortunately a very powerful factor.

Morris: Who was it that said money is the mother's milk of politics?

[Pause to turn tape over]

Morris: Let me ask you this about political fund-raising: Is most of it just general fund-raising for campaigns, or do you do more spot fund-raising for a specific radio program or a specific tour of the candidate?

Porter: Usually there are three kinds. There is fund-raising to keep the organization going, which means office rent, secretaries, telephones, which have to be there on a continuing basis and which are expensive. Then there's campaign fund-raising. Then a brilliant imaginative person [laughter] gets an idea that the candidate's election depends on having a specific program, and if enough people agree that this program would be helpful or more than helpful, there is this wild effort to go to various interested people to say: Will you give more?

Now, with the new election laws, at least in San Francisco, where there is a definite control on the amount a candidate could spend, I think these brilliant ideas wouldn't have as much chance as the Stevenson things had. Whatever we were doing for Stevenson, we were so sure it would be an important part of his carrying California.

Morris: So that some fund-raising is going on all the time--all year round?

Porter: Oh yes, I'm sure. They need it for the state organization.

Morris: From your experience, is it easier to raise money for something special like, If we can get this radio program on tonight we'll elect Stevenson, than to get the continuing supporters?

Porter: I think the records will show there are two groups, one Republican and one Democrat, who contribute to the party annually, or maybe I should say perennially. You will notice certain names on the contribution list time after time.

The presidential hopefuls who have been coming through here have certain sponsorship from people who are continuing campaign contributors.

Morris: Can you go back to this same group of core contributors if you have an emergency need?

- Porter: People do, yes. I'm speaking of the people to whom money is not important, they have so much of it.
- Morris: Are there any clues from your experience as to whether most of the money in political organizations and campaigns comes from the people to whom money doesn't matter, as opposed to the people who dig in their jeans for fifteen, twenty-five, fifty dollars?
- Porter: It takes so many fifteen, twenty-five and fifty to make five hundred, a thousand, or five thousand. But the small money is terribly important from the standpoint that it insures a loyalty and an interest; if you care enough to give even a dollar, you really are interested in the candidate.
- Morris: Is this something that has changed in the years since you've been in politics--the number of individuals contributing and the number of people making small donations?
- Porter: The recent election laws (and I don't know what's happened nationally; I don't think anything too drastic)--what's happened locally is that everything has to be accounted for. I was a member of the committee that gave a tea for Jack Ertola; the contribution of cookies and sandwiches had to be accounted! Really, I think this law has gone too far. I think the author of it, who is running for office, is also finding some of its difficulties.
- There used to be these rallies where everyone was supposed to give a dollar. I haven't seen any of that this time.
- Morris: When were there the rallies for dollars?
- Porter: I had nothing to do with that, but it seems to me that when Nixon ran in 1968, there was a rally in North Beach where people were collecting dollars.
- Morris: I was wondering about a reference we've come across to Dollars for Democrats in the Stevenson campaigns. Do you recall that?
- Porter: It was a good thing politically; I consider it a good thing. If you care enough to give a dollar, you care enough to continue your support of your candidate.
- Morris: But in terms of actually getting money together to run the operation, it doesn't work very well?
- Porter: Well, you need a lot more than those dollars. The \$1500 or \$2500 you might get if you did a good job is only a portion of what you need.

Morris: How much of the funds in the '40s was going to campaign management-- professional services?

Porter: Do you mean the overall funds?

Morris: Yes, I think so.

Porter: The money raised in the '40s was infinitesimal compared with what was raised in, let's take the presidential election in '72, where millions went into it on both sides. In the '40s you only had radio which, compared with television, was inexpensive. In the '40s you had mailings and many volunteers working long hours to do mailings. The campaign was usually managed by some official in the party, employing a newspaperman to do a specific job. Now there are many secretaries, a public relations firm is employed, there's so much money for television. In those days, there was just money for radio and brochures, mailings and signs.

Morris: I believe that Clem Whitaker, who had been a newspaperman, started his Whitaker and Baxter campaign management firm in the '40s. I wondered if he ever worked on Democratic campaigns.

Porter: No. He belonged to the Republicans.

Morris: Was there a Democratic Clem Whitaker?

Porter: There were some neutral people. I remember Howard Hanvy, and there was a Republican that I worked with on charity and local levels-- Don Nicholson--I worked with him in the Lapham campaign, of which I was woman's co-chairman with Dr. Maryanna Bertola. I worked with him on the March of Dimes; that was his ongoing charity thing.

Morris: In other words, his regular business was fund raising and campaign organizing.

Porter: Yes. But when I was president of Muscular Dystrophy [1957] and I instituted the Mother's March, he called me up and said: You stole my Mother's March which I did on the March of Dimes. [Laughter]

Morris: Did you find working with a professional person made things easier or go smoother?

Porter: The advantage of working with a professional person was you could see the pattern of the campaign and you knew where you approved or disapproved.

Labor and Other Interest Groups

Porter: I remember talking to Don Nicholson on the Lapham campaign and saying: See here--you can't do this.

This was because he was a Republican; he had no idea how important labor was to the Democrats. You didn't do certain things to offend labor--and I do not mean small things; I mean you did not take a major anti-labor line.

Morris: San Francisco is often referred to as a strong labor town.

Porter: It is.

Morris: More so than other parts of California?

Porter: It had been the hub city. Not as many laboring people live here now. The industries have moved out. The white-collar people have moved in with the various headquarters businesses in the highrise.

Morris: But in the '30s and '40s--

Porter: It was a tremendous force.

Morris: Because so many of the voters were working people.

Porter: Yes. I remember when Jack Shelley ran for Congress, his headquarters was in the labor temple on mission Street.

Morris: That makes sense in his career, doesn't it? Wasn't he a union secretary before he ran for the state senate?

Porter: Yes. But he also had the support of management.

Morris: How did he work that out?

Porter: I think they could always depend on what he said, what he was doing with legislation in Sacramento and in Washington. I think he would go in and say: This is going to protect us and it isn't going to ruin you, which is true--the outstanding result of the brave new world; management and labor sit down and talk to each other.

Morris: What were the other major groups with an interest in politics and government in San Francisco in the '40s?

Porter: In those days, the Downtown Association was a powerful group, and the Chamber of Commerce was a powerful group. They have a tremendous budget, but I do not see them effecting the community as they did in

Porter: the '40s.

Morris: Were there cultural groups or citizens groups or any other kind of breakdown of group where you'd go looking for support or expressions of opinion on political things?

Porter: I think so many of the groups were very careful not to be involved in politics because they didn't wish to lose members--I mean, when there was friction between members. That doesn't apply now.

The League of Women Voters used to have a candidates' night; but that was as far as they'd go. I'm now on the advisory board. I told you how startled I was to receive this questionnaire from them in which all of the board and the president have the first names and the given names--no Mrs. or Miss--and then below was listed the advisory board of all the ex-presidents, all beginning with Mrs. or Miss.

Morris: Do you suppose it was deliberate or just an oversight of somebody putting it together in a hurry?

Porter: No. The girls I think are slightly women's lib; I don't know why they didn't do Ms. But you know there's nothing so anonymous as Jane Doe; Miss Jane Doe or Mrs. Jane Doe is not so anonymous.

Morris: You think it helps in identifying women if they use their husbands' names?

Porter: I think it does--although Albert Chao once said: Please tell me who Mrs. Charles B. Porter is. [Laughter] I was always Julia Porter to him! Mrs. Charles B. Porter has been the appointee on the Planning Commission for six terms. All of my city certificates are Mrs. Charles B. Porter.

I think this extreme women's lib has occurred within the last three or four years.



Spain planning, 1944. From left: Catherine Bauer, Bill Malone, Helen Gehagan, Julia Porter. Stewart & Skelton Studios photograph.



at the Clift Hotel, 1945. Left to right: Helen Gehagan Douglas, Margaret Hikey, president of business women's national organization, Julia Porter, Gertrude Clark.



1946 campaign. Left to right: Julia Porter, Elinor Meller, Lucille Gleason (candidate for Secretary of State). Stewart & Skelton Studios photograph.



Julia Porter, co-vicechairman of Citizens for Kennedy, discussing campaign issues with John F. Kennedy at Clift Hotel dinner, 1960. Photograph by George Shannon.

ELECTION ACTIVITIES

1944-1963



Julia Porter and Lucretia Grady campaigning for John F. Shelley, 1963. John Hasket & Associates photograph.



Teamster official Jack Goldberger (left), Julia Porter, Mayoral candidate John F. Shelley, 1963.

V 1944 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

[Final portion of Interview II]

An Overview

Morris: Could we go back and talk about the 1944 national convention? Mr. Malone was back as state chairman.

Porter: That was the first time in history that women were on the resolutions committee, and there were I think eleven women and twelve men. I was the woman west of Chicago; I used to be known as that.

Morris: Only one woman from west of Chicago. That's remarkable.

Porter: California was more active. The eastern states were nearer the national committee, and when people know you you are appointed. But Washington phoned me that I was to be on this sub-resolutions committee and I had to leave two or three days before the delegation. I was slightly disappointed; I'd never been a delegate and I wanted to travel on the delegates' train. I said I didn't know if I could make it, but the committee turned out to be very interesting. This was a great honor as the men west of Chicago were limited to three or four. For three days we heard these requests for people to appear before the committee to suggest planks for the platform. There were all kinds of newsmen and reporters present. John McCormack was the chairman. I remember Senator McCarran [Pat] of Nevada who was a super troublemaker, saying to me: Now, you have to oppose that because California is being neglected. [Laughter] I knew what I wanted to oppose.

Then the chairman was gracious enough to have the women preside briefly. I had the gavel.

Morris: This was on the formal presentation.

Porter: We listened to everybody in the country. The newspaper people came before us; they wanted planks. The religious plank was one that came last. I remember somebody who wanted a plank on school lunches, bringing in large number of children about three and four years old who came in and sat on top of the table, saying: These are the children who will be deprived of the school lunches. Needless to say the school lunch plank was part of the platform.

Morris: Your delegation had all been elected at the June primary.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Were you pledged to a candidate?

Porter: To Roosevelt. We were all selected, and we were there without opposition.

Morris: There were no other candidates on the California ballot, then.

Porter: There was no other slate that I remember.

Morris: But there was difference of opinion as to who the vice presidential candidate should be?

[Telephone interruption]

Porter: Yes, and the delegation split. The north was for Truman; the south, with Helen Gahagan Douglas, was for Wallace.

Morris: Who was then in Roosevelt's cabinet, wasn't he?

Porter: Yes. I think history has shown that Wallace, although a very fine man, would have been a very bad President. There is so much argument about this. I read this book of Jim Bishop's, The Last Year of Roosevelt, in which he states that Roosevelt supported Wallace. Roosevelt did not support Wallace. The sub-resolutions committee chairman received a telegram from Franklin Roosevelt which we passed down the line which said: If I were a delegate, I would support Henry Wallace. But the delegates must make their own decisions.

We just said that he threw Wallace down the drain. When Franklin Roosevelt said: I would do so-and-so, but you must decide, he is not backing the candidate.

Morris: Because Roosevelt was perfectly capable of saying: I want you to pick so-and-so?

Porter: Yes. Of course, I know he said in '40: I won't run without Wallace. I think this feeling also carried on after Roosevelt's death. But

Porter: nobody on the sub-resolutions committee felt Franklin Roosevelt wanted Wallace. We heard the tale that Truman didn't want the nomination-- he was on the sub-resolutions committee.

Morris: Harry Truman himself was?

Porter: Yes. Senator Truman, Senator Hatch, Senator O'Mahoney. I think Nellie Taylor Ross was the director of the Mint, and she came from Wyoming where O'Mahoney came from. She was very busy saying: Don't you think that Mr. O'Mahoney would be a good vice president?

Morris: Was that a real possibility, or was he a favorite son?

Porter: No, no. I think the Truman thing, I had heard, was done with the consent or with the wish of Franklin Roosevelt. That it had been discussed who would be the vice president because there was opposition to Wallace.

Morris: What was the opposition to Wallace?

Porter: Because he was a dreamer and he was very impractical.

Morris: Was there opposition to Truman also, other than that he wasn't Wallace?

Porter: I think it was merely there were Wallace people, and there were Truman people, and Truman didn't want to take the nomination--I remember saying to him: Senator, you are being spoken of as a candidate for the vice president.

He said: I don't want it. I have my wife and my daughter and my career in Washington; I don't want it.

I read someplace that Hannegan, who was the chairman of the national committee, had to pressure Truman and phone the President that Truman wouldn't take it, and the President saying: Well, if he wants to ruin the country--

[Interruption]

Morris: Was Hannegan's feeling that it was Truman's own abilities that were important to have in the vice presidency, or that Truman was the best alternate to Wallace?

Porter: The only thing I know was I had met Truman when he was head of the Truman Committee, in which he did a superb job. I think they felt that he was capable. He had a clear head and he had integrity.

Morris: Did he come to California investigating the cost of defense production?

Porter: He was here at one of our fund-raising dinners. We had the whole committee there.

I don't know what they were doing--whether or not they were investigating. We were having a Jefferson-Jackson Day fund-raising dinner, and I know the head table had to have six places added to it.

The California Delegation

[Interview III resumes]

Morris: How had you come to be on the slate of delegates to the 1944 convention?

Porter: I was northern California chairman, and that meant that I would be a delegate as one of the women leaders in the state. How did I get on the sub-resolutions? Gladys Tillett decided that I was the representative person, and I was the person west of Chicago.

Morris: In other words, it had to do with your geographical slot rather than that they wanted a woman on the committee? Of did Gladys want a woman on the committee?

Porter: No, no. For the first time in history there were eleven women and twelve men.

Morris: Now, I found in your scrapbook a list that looks like it was on the official primary ballot: Candidates for Delegate to the Democratic Party National Convention. You said this was the only slate on the ballot?

Porter: Absolutely. [Laughter]

Morris: All right.

Porter: The agreements were made in advance.

Morris: Had there been party discussions beforehand?

Porter: Now, in 1932, when Roosevelt first ran in the primaries in California, there was an opposition. Mrs. Frank Dearing, who was an extraordinarily intelligent woman and had always been a Democrat (I think her husband was a very prominent lawyer), just on her own filed on the slate that wasn't for Roosevelt. That slate won, and she went to Chicago as a representative. Her tales of the convention were something you'd stand in line to get in to hear! [Laughter] She had a

Porter: quick mind and a great wit.

Morris: Did she tell you what she remembered of that convention?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Had many states gotten another delegation?

Porter: That was before I was deeply aware of the functioning or the mechanics of politics, and all I could do was to join this Democratic Women's Forum. This was after the primaries. Before the primaries, we were just for Roosevelt, and I'm sure we voted for the Roosevelt delegation, not knowing anybody on it.

Morris: Did Mrs. Dearing ever tell you why she didn't like the official choice?

Porter: I think she was maybe on the conservative side, but she continued to be a Democrat when the liberals became powerful.

Morris: And she was still active in the San Francisco Democratic Women's Forum?

Porter: Yes. Being active in that consisted of going to a luncheon meeting once a month and listening to somebody on our side.

Morris: Your side became more liberal over the years?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did that mean that some of the more conservative ladies ceased to come?

Porter: The thing that seems to have happened is all the conservative Republicans have moved over. You notice the difference in registration.

Morris: The conservative Republicans are joining the Democratic party?

Porter: Maybe I should say the liberal Republicans, because there were the people who were Hiram Johnson Republicans.

Morris: The Progressives.

Porter: Also, we have achieved the brave new world; it's a fait accompli. Now, whether it's as brave as we'd like it to be or it has worked out as well, it's here. I think maybe the reason we keep getting this extraordinarily large Democratic registration is because of personalities.

Morris: In California or in national politics?

Porter: I think nationally too.

Morris: It sounds as if, in the '40s, you didn't have to make a big effort for registration--it was coming.

Porter: We didn't know the techniques of the registration drive. I think there was the 'get out the vote'; that was important. But you got out the vote in the districts where you thought it should be gotten out.

Morris: In other words, you studied the registration lists to see where the Democrats were.

Porter: You didn't go and lose your mind over Pacific Heights that in those days was going to vote against you. Pacific Heights may now vote for the most extreme liberal.

Morris: Going back to the '44 convention, I wonder if you'd take a look at this list of delegates and tell me which ones you worked with most closely.

Porter: [Pause] Louise Beckwith is Southern California. I worked with Edmund Gerald Brown.

Morris: That's our Governor Brown the First.

Porter: Yes. [Laughter] I love that--you make them sound royal. Francis Carr was somebody with whom we worked. Louise Darby Dockweiler--do you know the name of Dockweiler? It's an old California name, and they were very important in the Democratic party.

Morris: Are they Southern California?

Porter: Yes. And I remember Mr. Dockweiler's great contribution to our pre-Chicago meeting, saying the most important thing was that we have the Bear Flag there. [Laughter]

Morris: Was he in the legislature at one point?

Porter: I don't think so. I think he was an old Californian, and I don't know whether he was a wealthy lawyer or Southern California land [owner]. Helen Gahagan Douglas I worked with. Herbert Erskine I worked with; he later became a federal judge. Cornelius Haggerty was the labor representative. George Harris has been my very good friend; you know he's the federal judge.

Morris: George Harris later became a federal judge, and you had worked with him on local campaigns?

Porter: Yes, when he was municipal judge. Maybe we just got his august advice. Chet Holifield, when we had statewide meetings was there. Ed Izaak was a former naval officer who was congressman from San Diego; I think he was defeated. Thomas Keating was a lawyer from Marin who's now, I think, a superior court judge. [Pause] William Malone, of course. Patrick McDonough, who was very active; I don't know what he did in Oakland, whether he was in construction or something. Culbert Olson.

Morris: He was automatically on it as past governor?

Porter: No. I mean, nobody was automatic. They met I don't know whether in Los Angeles or San Luis Obispo and made the decision. But he had been defeated only about two years--

Morris: Less than that; in July '44, he'd have been out a year and a half.

Porter: Yes. He was defeated, but he'd been the important Democrat in the state. Edwin Pauley was very active and he became national committee-man.

Morris: After the convention.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Was Mr. Pauley just beginning his interest in politics at that point?

Porter: Oh, no. He had been active a long time before. Harold Sawalish was I think an assemblyman from Contra Costa County, and he used to be at the state meetings. Jack Shelley was an important person. Claudia Vores was a person who worked with Helen in the South.

Morris: I counted seven women all together.

Porter: Yes. How many would you count today?

Morris: I don't know. The delegation is longer today. I have a '48 delegate list in which there are more women and a larger percentage.

Porter: Well, that is amazing. The thing is, the women there were not something on paper; they were a viable force.

Morris: Did you caucus together as a group of women?

Porter: No, we didn't; we caucused with the men.

Morris: You didn't see any need to--?

Porter: No, no. There was not this woman against man. After the decision was made that this was the woman, the Democratic Forum, people on

Porter: the county committee lower down accepted what was done just as the men did.

Morris: Do you remember what kind of a balance there was in that delegation, between north and south and different political points of view?

Porter: I think there was an absolute balance between the north and the south; there had to be.

Morris: Mr. Kenny and Mr. Brown both went on to state office themselves. Kenny was already attorney general, and Jack Shelley went to Congress.

Porter: Jack Shelley was state senator at this time.

Morris: I was thinking particularly of Brown and Kenny; was there any difference of opinion between them?

Porter: Brown was younger than Kenny, but Kenny thought that Pat was a fine person, I'm sure. You see, Kenny ran for governor, Pat ran for attorney general; they were both defeated. Shelley ran for Congress-- this was '46. Then Kenny went back and built up his law practice, and Brown ran the next time.

Pat Brown was, in a way, a wonderful person. The night of the defeat is a very bitter thing for any party. I remember Pat Brown in '46, the night the whole slate went down. He was there going around putting his arms around people saying: I don't feel badly; don't feel badly for me. I just feel badly for you; I'm upset that you feel this way.

He would run again! He ran for district attorney, was defeated; he ran again, he was elected. He ran for attorney general, he was defeated; he ran again, he was elected. When he ran for governor, he couldn't help making it. That was the famous Knowland-Knight split.

Morris: 1958.

Porter: Yes, and I remember working with one of the leading Republicans on a local issue. He said to me: I will never vote for Pat Brown again since he's been so-and-so.

And I said: Did you vote for Pat Brown?

The Republicans really put him in; they were so bitter about the conniving that was done to get Knight out; Knight could have been re-elected.

Morris: Let's see. Neither Ed nor Ellie Heller was on that slate of delegates.

Porter: Well, Ellie was elected national committeewoman, and Maureen Simpson

Porter: ran against her. So Ellie must have been put on some way.

Morris: That was my next question. How many of the people in that delegation as listed on the slate actually did go to the convention? How many alternates turned up?

Porter: I don't remember that, but I know there was always people who didn't go, and people who were appointed in their place.

Morris: How is that done?

Porter: I think the delegation caucussed and the leader suggested that Mrs. Smith be put in Mr. Brown's place since Mr. Brown was not there.

I was on the '48 delegation and I couldn't go (my husband was ill) and Harold Berliner was appointed in my place. But I was on the printed ballot. I remember, when he came back he came to see me to tell me everything that had happened, and what had happened there was something! That was when Jimmy Roosevelt tried to throw Truman out and get Eisenhower. Nobody knew what Eisenhower was, including Eisenhower, at that time. That was when there was the civil rights fight and the Wallace fight.

Vice-presidential Possibilities: Truman v. Wallace

Morris: Didn't Henry Wallace put up a fight for the vice presidential nomination in '44 too?

Porter: Yes, but that was all in hand because Roosevelt didn't back Wallace. The thing was, there was an anti-human feeling on the part of the Wallace people. But Roosevelt was there and he was going to get elected.

In Truman, I don't know whether you know of what I would mildly call Truman having a bad press. I think he was courageous, forthright; he made his fight on civil rights in which he lost the south in '48 (and civil rights then was a very mild thing compared with what we have now). He stuck by the anti-segregationists. I think the Wallace people kept after him. I remember driving with Margaret Truman in the car. We came from Sacramento on the train, went to the City Hall [San Francisco] where Truman spoke, and then across to Oakland, and Margaret Truman saying: Wallace, Wallace banners and no Truman banners.

You know, Truman was supposed to be defeated in 1948. [Laughter]

- Porter: I often think, though, if he goes on, he must be laughing in heaven at "Give 'Em Hell, Harry", with all the Republicans feeling deprived because they can't get in to see the play. [Laughter] And what they said about him when he was living!
- Morris: In '44, what was the sentiment in California about the various vice-presidential hopefuls?
- Porter: We were divided on that. Helen and I divided; she was for Wallace and I was for Truman. I think if Wallace had been elected President, it would have been a tragedy. He was a dreamer; he was a fine man but utterly impractical.
- Morris: How did Jimmy Roosevelt happen to have been a supporter of Mr. Wallace?
- Porter: I don't know that people could really quite fathom why he did the Eisenhower thing. I don't know, unless he was anti-Truman or felt Truman could not win.
- Morris: Was there any evidence for that?
- Porter: Oh yes, because it was he who headed the delegation from the South. The Southern California train in '48 went out, and when they were a few miles from Los Angeles, great Eisenhower signs appeared on it.

When you had an incumbent, you're going to keep him. Why Gerald Ford should worry about Ronald Reagan, I don't know. The Republicans couldn't repudiate their incumbent, who is in line for another term, without just handing the election to the Democrats on a platter. You just don't do that. There were very strong political minds at that convention.

The '44 convention was tremendously interesting because I think the United Auto Workers packed the galleries with bobbysoxers who were all for Wallace. I remember--I was in the front row--and Bob Hannegan saying--I think it was Senator Jackson who was chairman--Adjourn the meeting. Senator Jackson said: I can't. And Hannegan said: I'm taking my orders from the President of the United States; you're taking your orders from me.

Jackson banged and banged and the bobbysoxers just continued, and he [Jackson] just got up and walked out of the meeting.

[Tape 5 begins]

- Morris: Could you tell me a little bit more about the preliminary work in California, getting ready for the '44 convention? Do all the delegates meet together to decide what's going to happen?

Porter: Yes. I'm trying to remember the meeting in Southern California in which there was a great objection to Wallace on the part of some--

Morris: In Southern California?

Porter: No--throughout the state. Maybe it was more in Northern California.

Morris: Would this have had anything to do with his views on agriculture and labor?

Porter: I think his views on a great many things people considered extremely left.

Morris: Had people on the committee had much contact with Truman or a chance to evaluate him?

Porter: I remember at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner, I was at the speakers' table. The Truman committee came in, and of course it was terribly exciting. He was investigating I think the government contracts, which was just dynamite.

He wasn't building it up as a platform for himself as our friends have in Watergate; he was getting the truth, and he didn't want personal glory. But there was Senator Truman and--who else? Well, the whole committee was there at the dinner. People knew him. I mean, the way he handled that--what was it, war production?

Morris: Yes, whether costs and quality were what contracts specified.

Porter: The way he handled them, he didn't pull any punches, but he made no effort for self-aggrandizement. There were certain reasons, as there always are, for these things not working well, and I think he corrected them. People who hadn't known anything about him, other than that he was a Senator from Missouri, had a tremendous respect for him; and this was nationwide. When you are going to run for the office of vice president, you have to have some recognition nationally.

I remember Nellie Taylor Ross who was director of the Mint.

Morris: In San Francisco?

Porter: No, dear--nationally. The women really were there to a large extent, for those years. I remember she came to me and said: Don't you think Senator O'Mahoney would be a good candidate for vice president?

I understand, and maybe you have read that Truman was committed to Jimmy Byrnes, and he wouldn't budge. I do know when on the

- Porter: sub-resolutions committee I said to him: Senator, you are being considered for vice president, he said: I don't want it. I have my wife, my daughter, I like being in the Senate. I don't want it; I don't want my life disturbed.
- Morris: One more question on the Truman Committee. Had there been questions raised in California about possible irregularities in war contracts here?
- Porter: I don't know. I don't know whether it was any specific thing. It was a general thing because I think there had been criticism. I am sure that Roosevelt wanted this done; he wanted the thing straightened out. He also didn't want to be in the position of having anything that was wrong covered up.
- Morris: When and how did the idea of Truman as vice president begin to emerge?
- Porter: My feeling is, it came from Washington, and he never would have been vice president without Franklin Roosevelt's approval. Every President selects his own, or approves his own, vice president; other than Adlai Stevenson, who confused the whole party machinery by throwing the thing open to the convention. [Laughter]
- Morris: Is that what you mean by an excess of democracy?
- Porter: In that case, it was a lack of judgment. [Laughter] When I say excess of democracy, I would really think I'm saying people who don't know what is being done, what should be done, why it should or why it shouldn't be done, who get deeply involved and muddy the waters. If people know what they're doing, things will work out. They didn't when Stevenson was nominated.
- Morris: When your delegation had its preliminary meeting before the convention, you'd decided to support Truman?
- Porter: There was no commitment. But in Southern California there was the strong Wallace feeling; in Northern California there was the strong anti-Wallace feeling.
- Morris: So it was more an anti-Wallace rather than a pro-Truman delegation going into the convention?
- Porter: I think maybe Truman was mentioned.
- Morris: By whom?
- Porter: It must have been the state chairman or the leader of the delegation. Does it tell who leads the delegation?

Morris: Bob Kenny. But Kenny was a Wallace man, I assume. This is from the July 15th San Francisco Call about the California delegation; it says, "The Democratic County Central Committee of Alameda is the only party organization going on record in favor of retaining vice president Henry Wallace. Attorney General Robert Kenny as chairman heads the delegates and alternates leaving Oakland tonight in special Pullmans on the Overland Limited." That's a lovely era.

Porter: Yes. I went four days early because I was on the sub-resolutions committee.

Sub-resolutions Committee Shapes the Platform

Morris: What was the size of that sub-resolutions committee?

Porter: I think it was twenty-three. I think twelve men and eleven women. Josephus Daniels was on it; Mary Norton, who was the congresswoman from New Jersey, a tremendously powerful person in Congress, with Hague backing--

Morris: Jersey City is a strong labor town too, isn't it?

Porter: The strange thing was that Hague never interfered with her; he supported her on some child welfare legislation and she became devoted to him. I remember a dinner at which she defended Hague and everybody was livid and rigid because, you know, Hague was supposed to be one of the corrupt bosses. But she was a tremendously powerful congresswoman. I remember John McCormack deferring to her; he was chairman of the committee. And Josephus Daniels was on it at eighty-something [years old]. Senator O'Mahoney was on it. Nellie Taylor Ross was on it.

Morris: And Senator Truman.

Porter: Yes, and Senator Hatch, I think.

You're quoting from the paper. There was a horrid article when we came back saying, "The gravy train"--did you see it?

Morris: No, but I shall look for it. What is the function of the sub-resolutions committee?

Porter: The sub-resolutions committee really makes the platform. These people, representatives of the farmers' union, the conservative agricultural people, the National Association of Manufacturers--

Porter: every pressure group comes and suggests something. I remember a social worker bringing the children from the Chicago stock yards to lobby for the continuance of school lunches. There was a plank on newspapers; I remember when some member of the committee wished to change the wording, to tone it down, we got a message from the head of the Associated Press, that he had gone over it and would we please not have these lay people interfering.

Then there was a plank on God, and that was the only plank on which there was no discussion. [Laughter]

Morris: Was there a preliminary platform document that those people were speaking to, either approving or disapproving?

Porter: Yes. And then the resolutions committee, which really was an honorary committee (this sub-resolutions committee did the hard work) was presented with these findings which they in large part accepted.

Morris: Was Jack Shelley on your committee?

Porter: No. You see, there were only twenty-three people in the United States on it. Jack was the representative of the California delegation to the resolutions committee.

Morris: The sub committee is a different group of people than the full resolutions committee?

Porter: Yes. After you've been on the sub-committee you're interested in seeing what the platform committee is going to do. I know that they largely accepted our recommendations because going through all the material we heard again would be complicated and time consuming.

Senator McCarran of Nevada was on the sub-resolutions committee, and it was he who handed the gavel over to me. I'd say: How long do you wish? They'd say: Fifteen minutes. Then he'd say: Give them ten. [Laughter] I would say: Do you think you could make it in ten minutes? and they'd always say yes.

Morris: Were there any crucial issues on which there was a lot of debate, or new ideas in that platform?

Porter: I remember--what in the world was Father Coughlan campaigning against? We had him there. The only thing I can think is maybe we were getting into civil rights, taking a stand, and that would have to be gone into because the civil rights was the thing that split the '48 convention.

Morris: All I found in the press clippings was a comment that the convention might have a bearing on the California ballot issue on the right to

Morris: work. Did that surface at the national convention in 1944? Was there a plank on right to work legislation?

Porter: I don't remember.

Morris: I think that's before the Taft-Hartley Act, which also was a hot issue in '48.

Porter: I know the issue of women's rights came up. In that era, as I remember, the League of Women Voters wanted to retain the protective legislation for women. Now everybody has changed.

Morris: How many committees, besides your committee, were functioning there in Chicago before the convention?

Porter: I don't know specifically, but there must have been a number.

You see, the reason for the sub-resolutions committee was to plan for important and large things. If you are going to say you have the hearings open to everybody who wants to come, the important and the unimportant came--and it is time consuming.

Morris: Any citizens or any organization that wants to can just come, or do they have to put in a request to be heard?

Porter: In those days they put in a request. I think now there's a tendency of somebody with a great deal of energy and more or less intelligence and a great deal of feeling to come and say: I represent a hundred or a thousand or more people, when they merely represent themselves and are really wishing to propound their particular prejudice.

I think the people we heard were screened, but you couldn't keep people out. I remember one person who just turned up was from the National Farmers Union--the small farmers as opposed to the big farmers.

Morris: Is there more to the story about Jack Shelley and Culbert Olson and which was going to sit on the resolutions committee?

Porter: Jack Shelley was chosen by the delegation to sit on the resolutions committee. Culbert Olson asked him if he would step down since he, Culbert Olson, was the former governor and he wanted very much to sit on the resolutions committee. Jack Shelley said: Step down, never! You have spoiled the dream of my life--to be mayor of San Francisco--and I'm doing nothing for you.

This goes back to the Reilly-Malone fight in which Reilly won the state chairmanship, ran for mayor, and Jack Shelley couldn't run for mayor because he knew he didn't have a chance. Jack later

Porter: on achieved the dream of his life and became mayor.

Morris: It sounds as if Mr. Olson was not very welcome in that Chicago convention.

Porter: No. There had been so much anti-Olson feeling in the party. The Democrats defeated Olson; if they'd voted for him, he would have been re-elected governor. Many of the hard-headed political people felt that he had put the party back in the way he'd handled the office: the result was that the Republican attorney general, Earl Warren, won handily.

But strange things happen in Republican politics, too. You know, I didn't believe that Reagan could be elected; I didn't believe that the people of California would choose a movie actor. And do you know that Ronald Reagan was once a Democrat, and he was the only Hollywood person loyal to Truman in '48. In '48 everybody turned down Truman, and Ronald Reagan didn't.

Convention Proceedings

Morris: At what point in the 1944 convention itself did you begin to have the feeling that Truman was a viable vice presidential candidate?

Porter: I think during the sub-resolutions meeting--it was during the sub-resolutions meeting. I can't remember if there was feeling that Truman would be the man with the delegation or Wallace should be the man, before they left here.

Morris: I'm curious about the note in the paper about the Alameda County delegation being--

Porter: It didn't mention Truman, did it?

Morris: No. It just says that that county was the only one that was for Wallace.

Porter: Well, yes. Bob Hannegan was head of the national committee. He knew where he was going before we got to Chicago. The people who were close to Hannegan must have known.

Morris: Was he there supervising the preliminary activities?

Porter: Yes. I told you of his telling Senator Jackson to adjourn the meeting; he was taking his orders from the President of the United States.

Morris: Tell me about the convention itself; what's that like to a delegate?

Porter: When you first enter politics, it's simply marvelous; maybe I would be jaded now. There was lots of music, lots of demonstrations, lots of dissension. [Laughter]

Morris: Lots of dissension?

Porter: Oh, yes! What book was I reading? A book on Sam Rayburn--I think it said the Texas delegation was so out of line on everything that they had fist fights in delegations.

Morris: On the floor of the convention! My goodness.

Porter: Now, I'm sure it doesn't happen that way any more. Little boys don't fight anymore, do they?

Morris: Yes, they do. [Laughter] And so do little girls.

Was it a foregone conclusion that Franklin Roosevelt would be renominated?

Porter: Oh yes. Politicians want to win; that's the major thing. They knew they could win with Roosevelt. It's an amazing thing. You say you're old enough to remember Roosevelt. Were you on the Roosevelt side or on the other side.

Morris: I was not political in those days.

Porter: But was your family?

Morris: They were New Englanders; they were Republicans.

Who were the major speakers? Do you recall if you thought any of them were promising politicians who might go on to bigger things?

Porter: Of course, the chairman of the convention had a key spot. Gladys Tillett, who was vice chairman (and she did something at the United Nations later on) was one of the speakers. Then there was the person who gave the keynote speech.

Morris: Did that leave an indelible impression?

Porter: [Laughter] After so many years, I've forgotten.

Morris: Was there any kind of a to-do about adopting the platform?

Porter: No.

Morris: The major action was the selection of the vice president?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Was there much caucusing and politicking going on?

Porter: Tremendous amount. You see, Truman really didn't want it; he absolutely didn't want it. So all of these other people who wanted it were trying to get their people together, as Nellie Taylor Ross spoke to me and said: What is California going to do?

I think my response was that I'd have to talk to them, because you learn to be a little cautious at certain times in politics.

Morris: How did the caucusing go? There's more to it than California delegates meeting in a group, isn't there?

Porter: Let's talk about it with the machine off, so I have my thoughts in order.

[Tape off briefly]

Morris: So the caucusing during a convention is not only candidate-nominating; it's also party business, at the same time. That makes it pretty busy, doesn't it?

Porter: Very! You scarcely sleep when you go to the convention.

Morris: How did Mr. Hannegan proceed with putting together the nomination of Harry Truman?

Porter: I think, from what I had read, Roosevelt really wanted Truman and he may have been influenced by Hannegan. Now, I don't know, but I would suspect that he got in touch with all of his lieutenants throughout the country and said: I think Truman's good; how would your delegation feel?

Some of them were going to be for Wallace, where their chairman couldn't do anything about it because that's what the people wanted, and the other people didn't want Wallace. In 1940, some of the delegates were incensed because the President had made Wallace the candidate, hadn't given them a choice, and they still remained anti-Wallace.

Morris: I see. What sense did you have of how much strength Wallace did have at the beginning of the convention?

Porter: He had a reasonable amount of strength. Helen Gahagan Douglas worked

Porter: herself just to a thread supporting Wallace.

Morris: Did you and she ever talk about this?

Porter: Well, I told her I was for Truman.

Morris: Going in.

Porter: Yes--I mean at the convention. I found it was a very hard decision for me to make. I don't know; there were so many negative things about Wallace that I can't now remember, and there seemed to be positive things--I really felt Truman was better. And we all didn't know that Roosevelt was going to die in six months, although he didn't come to the convention. The pictures of him coming back from Honolulu (he was out there conferring with MacArthur in August) he looked simply shocking. But there was the possibility, everybody knew that something might happen. There was no kind of assurance that it would--

Morris: Be a full four-year term?

Porter: No, but that he would go so quickly! There was a feeling that he might not make it.

Morris: Was your difficulty in making this choice because of your closeness to Helen Douglas?

Porter: Yes, because I admired her, I was devoted to her, we'd been warm friends. She and I agreed on things; I was her voice in the north.

Morris: Do you recall how the California delegation discussions went?

Porter: I think the thing was they lined up Wallace or Truman. I remember one of Helen's friends and lieutenants, a very fine woman, coming to me, on the pretext of borrowing an iron and saying--

Morris: Men can't do that, you know.

Porter: [Laughter]--saying she understood, she really sympathized with the way I felt. She was doing her voting with Helen, but she knew how hard it was.

Morris: What sort of a division was there?

Porter: I think California was wrangling. When they passed, they were still wrangling.

Morris: This is the first ballot.

Porter: I think so--then they got the votes for Truman, and they made it

Porter: unanimous. Of course, all the political leaders were wild because you want to be counted with the winner, and California wasn't.

Morris: Bill Malone was trying to get some kind of a decision from the delegation on the floor while the balloting was going on?

Porter: Yes. Maybe he had the votes and wanted more. Or somebody asked that we pass; you know, one person. You never have an organization that works smoothly all the time; one person upsets the applecart.

Morris: Can that be a crucial kind of a thing?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did you feel it was in this case?

Porter: No. The California leadership was very close to Truman. Did I tell you about Albert Chao, the first Chinese to go to a convention, who was my alternate?

When Truman was here as vice president, the Chinese entertained him lavishly and Truman became devoted to Albert. After Truman became President, whenever Albert went to Washington, he stayed at the White House. He once said to me: I'm the only Chinese friend of two presidents. I'm a friend of Chiang Kai-shek and a friend of Harry Truman's.

Morris: How did the California leadership get close to Truman, who was from far away Missouri?

Porter: I imagine they were working with Hannegan and that it must have been the personalities.

Morris: Hannegan and Malone were a good Irish team?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Would it be on that kind of a basis?

Porter: I am sure Hannegan admired Malone as a political leader. You must realize Harry Truman--all of the Presidents were politicians, but Harry Truman was quite politically aware of what it meant to have organized support.

Morris: He felt that California Democrats were well-organized as a working political group, better than some other states?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: That's interesting, because quite often, in talking with people about political affairs, you get a feeling that California is left out--that those guys in the east don't pay much attention to California.

Porter: They used to pay a great deal of attention. But as long as California is so schizophrenic, which it is at the present time, with eight or nine or seven national committeewomen and men--if you don't have one leader, you're not going to be regarded. Nobody can deliver anything from California at the moment but chaos.

We had a telethon at which the governor did not see fit to appear. If the governor looks with distaste on the party, the party isn't going to be very strong.

Morris: Did the fact that you backed Truman and Helen Douglas was for Wallace have any effect on your own personal friendship?

Porter: Well, no. I always cared about Helen, and I think she cared about me. But I think if it hadn't happened the ties would have been stronger.

She disliked Truman very much.

Morris: Because of knowing him in Congress?

Porter: She just didn't approve. I think she thought maybe Truman wasn't liberal enough; and he was being taken to pieces for being too liberal.

Morris: You said he had a bad press.

Porter: Yes. I talked to Helen about a year ago when she was here, with all the various excessively democratic groups milling around, and I said to her: It's different, isn't it?

She said: No, it's just the same as it always was. [Laughter]

Elections and Functions of a National Committeewoman

Morris: As the outgoing national committeewoman, did she have a say in who was going to be nominated as her successor?

Porter: Yes. She worked very hard; she wanted me to be national committee-woman. I felt I could not afford it; it's a very expensive thing. I suggested Ellie Heller. Ellie hadn't done so much. And Helen backed Ellie Heller, I mean in this caucus. She brought many votes for Ellie Heller as national committeewoman.

- Morris: Wasn't there somebody else who wanted the job, from Southern California?
- Porter: Yes, whose name was Maureen Simpson.
- Morris: Did that complicate things--to have Helen, a Southern California woman, backing a Northern California woman?
- Porter: No. It's always been accepted that if the national committeeman came from the north, the woman came from the south; if the woman came from the north, the man came from the south. So here we had Ed Pauley who had been elected national committeeman--
- Morris: You do it one at a time?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: You start with the national committeeman?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: Okay. Was there any challenge to him for that job?
- Porter: I don't remember. You can do it viva voce or by roll call. When we got into the southern, to the woman, it was a roll call vote.
- Morris: That indicates usually that there's more difference of opinion?
- Porter: It indicates there's a difference of opinion, and it's something people do not like.
- Morris: You can really be nailed down on how you voted.
- Porter: Yes, and they don't like it.
- Morris: So there was a roll call on the two women.
- Porter: Yes, and Ellie Heller won, I think substantially; I don't remember, but it was a margin that was comfortable.
- Morris: It wasn't 33 to 29 or something like that?
- Porter: No.
- Morris: Are the national committee spots a four-year job?
- Porter: It was. I'm talking about '44. The Democratic party is under changed rules at the present time. I was shocked when I saw Madeline Haas Russell as national committeewoman, and somebody said she's one of

Porter: seven!

Morris: When did that change come about?

Porter: I think in the McGovern convention.

Morris: I know there have been a lot of organizational changes. But at that time it was a four-year job--between national elections, in other words. That's a long stretch of time to give to that level of activity, isn't it?

Porter: It worked. People almost have to get educated to their jobs, and it takes a good year or so to educate them.

Morris: That means, then, that in 1944 the national committee people were elected by the convention delegation.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Was there activity going on in the California delegation about who should be national committee persons?

Porter: Yes, oh yes. [Laughter] That had been thought out well in advance.

Morris: Are there any other things about that convention that you'd like to say now, or do you want to leave that till next week?

Porter: I think if we leave it till next week, perhaps I'll do--

Morris: I think you've given a good picture of it.

Porter: You see, I had a key spot there with the sub-resolutions committee, with the California delegation.

Morris: Why don't we stop there for today.

INTERVIEW IV: 27 October 1975
[Tape 5, side 2 begins]

- Morris: After I went over my notes when we finished last week, I discovered that I've got a couple more questions relating to the 1944 convention. You were describing the selection of the national committeeman and the national committeewoman. I was surprised to find out that it was going on at the same time as the convention itself was making its decisions. I wondered if those decisions as to who will be the national committeeman and committeewoman relate to who is being selected in the convention as the candidate. In this case it was the vice presidential.
- Porter: It was purely a state thing. The south had a candidate for national committeewoman; the north had a candidate. The south had a candidate for national committeeman, and I think he was there with the support of the north; it was Ed Pauley.
- Morris: After the convention was over, did you continue to work closely with Ellie Heller as national committeewoman, as you had with Helen Douglas?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: Was this Mrs. Heller's first major political job?
- Porter: In those days, there were not as many people participating, or I think interested in participating in politics. Those were the days of the 48-hour week, and so many people didn't have leisure in which to participate. Ellie Heller had gone with her husband; she'd been to many more conventions than I had. But she hadn't worked in the woman's organization.
- Morris: She hadn't done the nuts and bolts at the committee level.
- Porter: No. I was put in at the top level and then did the nuts and bolts.
[Laughter]
- Morris: You and Ellie Heller are more or less of the same generation?
- Porter: She is younger than I am, but I think we've both reached the stage of great maturity.
- Morris: In a sense, Ellie Heller learned some of the nuts and bolts of political activity from you?
- Porter: She had been a League of Women Voters director, and I think the organization is something that was learned in the League.

Morris: We don't have much about her mother-in-law, the elder Mrs. Heller. Somebody said that she was an hereditary Democrat, and I wonder if she ever talked with you about her own interest in politics.

Porter: She was one of the reasons that I was in politics. She was interested in women and interested in women who had served in important community activities. She wanted good leadership; this is very difficult for me to say, but I was considered good. When Helen Gahagan Douglas asked me to be northern chairman, Mrs. Heller invited me to lunch with Bill Malone. They asked me to be northern chairman. Mrs. Heller said: I will pay for the best secretary money will buy for you and help run your office.

Mr. Malone was to do the other part of running the office, because it does cost money. Mrs. Heller said: If you take it, you will not have so much work to do. I had two very fine secretaries--in fact, three--and I worked from after nine till five along with the secretaries.

Morris: It's that demanding a task.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: And Mrs. Heller felt that women particularly should be encouraged?

Porter: Oh yes.

Morris: Just in politics, or did she have women proteges in other fields, too?

Porter: She was a very remarkable woman. I think there were numerous charities and things that women were heading where she helped. There was something called the AWVS during the war--

Morris: I remember that--the American Womens Volunteer Service.

Porter: She was very active in that and more than generous. She supported or was very generous in her support of the facilities for the aged.

Morris: Is she the one that got you involved in the Crocker Home?

Porter: No. I was on that Board several years before I met Mrs. Heller.

VI SOME FACTS OF POLITICAL LIFE

Women as Voters, 1944

Morris: Then, in going through your press clippings, I came across a campaign speech that you made in 1944. [Laughter] You may have forgotten.

Porter: I do--I remember saying: Did I say that?

Morris: There was a part of this that particularly struck me--you were speaking particularly to women voters and made the point that in 1944 women were for the first time a decisive factor in an election. Did that mean that women were then the majority of registered voters?

Porter: I haven't the figures on that; perhaps it was because there was so much more women's participation. This was Eleanor Roosevelt and what she did for women. Of course, there had been a woman in the cabinet in Harding's era; Mabel Willebrand Walker had been Attorney General. She was the person who set up Alderson, which is where I served on the board of the women's prison, and which is the ideal prison--if you can have an ideal prison, because confinement is the thing that embitters the inmates.

Then, Frances Perkins was the secretary of labor. And then so many men, like Oscar Ewing--who had a woman, May Thompson Evans, as his assistant.

I know the League of Women Voters was a training ground for some of the leadership--maybe a great deal--during that period. I know Gladys Tillett had been a former president in North Carolina. She greeted me with open arms.

Morris: Would you remember if, when the election returns were in, there was a noticeable increase in women voting in '44?

Porter: I think progressively more and more women have voted since the

Porter: Eighteenth Amendment.

Morris: That was California law before it was national law, wasn't it?

Porter: I don't know. I know Valeska Bary used to tell amusing stories of the suffragette movement [laughter] and the different factions.

Morris: Were you aware of those differences in the women's groups that you worked with?

Porter: No. I really didn't come along till '32.

Morris: I know that, but some of the literature on women in public affairs points out that there seem to have been differences of opinion, and fairly strong, among women who were active in politics, on through the '30s and the '40s.

Porter: In my era, most girls, as they grew up, thought of getting married and were involved in the domestic-social thing of marriage. I think it wasn't till in the '30s that more women went in for careers.

Morris: And along with careers, they became more interested in government and politics?

Porter: Yes. But in the '60s, so many of the girls married so young; they married after a year or two in college. There seemed an era when they were not being professional people.

Morris: Right--after World War II.

Porter: No. It was in the '60s, during the demonstrations and all. There was that period when they dated from the time they were ten, they married at twenty-two. Do you remember? I was appalled because in my era, there were lots of boys--different boys--and here these girls were in this period going with the same boy through grammar, high school, college. That's changed.

Protocol at 1945 United Nations Conference

Morris: Going back to 1944, how about things like the U.N. and post-war European aid? Were these considered women's issues?

Porter: I was on the U.N. committee here, and it was a tremendously exciting thing. The bitterness about the people who were not on the committee, the bitterness about the failure of important people to get tickets which were limited to the sessions, was sort of shaking. We

- Porter: believed it was the peace of the world that we were making, but if you saw all of these well-bred, important people [laughing] being very bitter about not getting to certain sessions, or why weren't they on committees you would have wondered at our chances of world peace!
- Morris: This is the San Francisco committee that made arrangements and things like that?
- Porter: Yes. The mayor appointed a committee of a hundred citizens. (I showed you the parchment that we received with our names and the names of the delegates). It's very interesting to notice how many fewer countries there were at the inception. But there was this great wave of idealism in which there was the feeling: if we could have the United Nations we would have peace for all time.
- Oh, it was a slightly shaking thing--everybody quarreling so violently to be present at the efforts to make peace.
- Morris: Was there a public gallery for watching the deliberations of the representatives?
- Porter: Yes, the hearings were held in public. The opera house, which is not the largest building in the world, was used. The press had a certain section, and press from all over the world was there. The lower floor was for the delegates, the upper floor was for the public.
- Morris: And there was a scramble to get tickets to be in the gallery.
- Porter: Yes. Now, I remember Ellie Heller, as national committeewomen, had tickets. There were not to be used for her use alone; they were to be given to people in the Democratic party who had served and were active. I remember I had forty-eight northern chairmen champing at the bit--
- Morris: All wanting a turn at those tickets.
- Porter: Yes, and I was able to get some. I remember one evening at dinner, Franck Havenner, the congressman, was there. I said I was trying to get tickets for so-and-so, and it was just desperate because people thought that you really could get tickets, and if you didn't get them a ticket it was because you didn't want to. So he handed me maybe a dozen tickets, which were like hidden gold. He called me about noon the next day and said he needed I don't know how many, and I said I had three that I hadn't given.
- Morris: He needed some of his tickets back.
- Porter: Yes, to take care of some of his people. But the feeling was that

Porter: we really were going to have an instrument that meant peace, not alone in our time for for all time.

Morris: Do you know why San Francisco was selected as the city in which the conference was held?

Porter: I don't know. People like San Francisco. Many of the people who were making the decision had been here. Whether it was because the war in Europe was much nearer the eastern seaboard than the war in Asia was near us (yet we did have submarines coming into the harbors). You see, the war was in progress during part of the United Nations meeting--and the surrender in Europe was at the latter part of the convention.

Morris: Yes the meeting was April 25 through June 26, 1945. What remarkable timing!

Porter: Yes. Roosevelt died unexpectedly [April 12, 1945], and I know there was the discussion whether to postpone the United Nations; President Truman decided to go on with it. I remember his riding down Van Ness Avenue in an open car.

Morris: There was a lot of pomp and ceremony about the whole conference.

Porter: Yes. But see how relatively few nations there were, compared with the number now.

Morris: Yes. It was about fifty nations; there are over a hundred members of the U.N. now.

Liberal Democratic Factions, 1947-48

Morris: You said that you didn't go to the '48 national convention. But I wondered if you went to some of the preliminary planning sessions that started as early as '47.

Porter: I probably did. Yes, there must have been, because there was a split in the Democratic party on whether to support Truman again. There were certain people who did not wish to, as shown by the fact that Henry Wallace ran on his own. The Southern California train left Los Angeles, and I don't know how far out it was when it burst out with Eisenhower signs. Nobody knew--definitely, who was responsible, but Jimmy Roosevelt was supposed to be the perpetrator.

Morris: In '48?

Porter: Yes. In '48, everybody knew Truman was going to lose, that he didn't have a chance. The only person who didn't know he was going to lose was Harry Truman. Politicians always want a winner. So, some of the political minds of southern California thought Eisenhower, whose politics nobody knew at that time, but who had tremendous national popularity, would be a fine candidate.

I have heard Harry Truman quoted as saying, 'Any incumbent president can get the renomination on his own party.' You just cannot repudiate your own candidate without being sure that you'll be defeated. Nevertheless, I think they went ahead, with all the people who had good sense going ahead and backing Truman. But there were people who were loyal to him who didn't think they were going to win.

Morris: On what grounds did they base this general feeling that he wasn't going to win?

Porter: Truman had what is known as a bad press. [Laughter] (I think it's now called a bad media.) In the press he was criticized for everything he did, and he did some explosive things, like taking on the music critic who criticized his daughter.

Morris: There were some substantive things too, I think, differences of opinion.

Porter: Yes. I don't know how Wallace felt, but I know Helen Douglas opposed the Greek-Turkish loans, which were Truman's thing. There were many of the very liberal Democrats who thought Truman wasn't liberal enough.

Morris: How about the Taft-Hartley law?

Porter: Truman was against that.

Morris: There are some comments that California Democrats felt that this was a body blow to organized labor. Is that a campaign position, or was that--?

Porter: No, they really did feel it. Labor is so powerful, people don't think of it. But at that time they did feel that it was a blow. You see, labor came from 1932, the Franklin Roosevelt era, where there was no collective bargaining; step by step, it grew more and more powerful.

Morris: The reading I've done indicates that James Roosevelt was very much in the forefront of opposition to Taft-Hartley and wanted stronger wording in the platform. Do you remember any of the discussions of that?

Porter: I remember some of the meetings. I remember a meeting in Southern California in which there was, to put it mildly, a schism in the party.

Morris: Would that have been at San Luis Obispo?

Porter: I think it was in Los Angeles. I remember the San Luis Obispo meeting, but it seemed to me this was in Los Angeles, in which there were people who wanted Jimmy Roosevelt for governor. He was a very powerful and also a very attractive figure at that time. I remember Bob Kenny, who had been defeated for governor, assailing Roosevelt on--I can't remember what particular thing it was, but he felt that Roosevelt hadn't been strong enough.

Morris: That's interesting that as early as '47 there were people thinking of James Roosevelt for governor. It occurred to me, reading the reports, that possibly Mr. Roosevelt thought that he might be a compromise candidate for vice president. Is that a possibility?

Porter: I don't think so.

Morris: How did he come to build his political base in California?

Porter: He didn't need to--he was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's son. He'd been the son who'd spent the greatest amount of time with his father, and people welcomed him with open arms. Then, as always seems to happen in politics on both sides of the fence, the party divided; there were the anti-Roosevelt people and the pro-Roosevelt people. The north became anti-Roosevelt.

Morris: Any idea why that was?

Porter: Well, I would imagine--I don't know now, but it must have been over some issues. The issue was how liberal you were going to be. The people who stood behind Truman were the middle-of-the-road liberals; the extreme liberals were the people who supported Wallace. Do you remember the Americans for Democratic Action who were not so active here, but they were very active in the east?

I remember India Edwards saying--she had so much influence because she had been another person who said President Truman would win. She traveled the country with him; he had confidence in her. She wanted women appointees, and he made some. She had Eugenie Anderson appointed minister to Denmark. I think Eugenie Anderson was on the liberal side. She couldn't have supported Wallace, but I remember India saying that Eugenie said that she owed this to the ADA. And India said: Well, you owe it to the Democratic party.

Morris: Was Americans for Democratic Action a part of the democratic party?

Porter: No. It was sort of idealistic--very liberal independent group with many members who were Democrats.

Morris: Did it tend to be younger people?

Porter: No. I think the ages were the same, but maybe these were the intelligentsia, the very idealistic. You had to really have a Ph.D. to be in the Americans for Democratic Action. [Laughter]

Morris: I've heard a couple of comments that Students for a Democratic Society, which popped up in the late '60s and was closely identified with the student-type demonstrations, was a descendant of the ADA.

Porter: The ADA was a very controlled organization. It didn't have the kind of demonstrations the students had in the '60s; it was more what Common Cause is today. As you read, can't you see the same kind of people who are in Common Cause being in the ADA?

Morris: I was going to ask if you felt there were any similarities with the Eugene McCarthy and McGovern kind of candidacy and the ADA kind of approach.

Porter: I would say it was more the Wallace approach of the extreme liberals.

Morris: By '47, was the Democratic party taking positions or getting involved in the controversies on the un-American activities, communists in government issues? I was thinking of the national committee and the state committee, too.

Porter: Of course, communism was an unpleasant word at that time. I remember Franck Havenner being pressured to repudiate the support of Harry Bridges. Whether he did it or not, I don't know; I don't remember. But any candidate felt a communist endorsement was the kiss of death.

Morris: The Republicans seem to have, in their literature and materials, come out four-square against anything that looked like communism, and I wondered if the Democratic organizations got involved in the same kind of thing.

Porter: Everybody was very careful not to be labeled communist.

Morris: Was it raised in regard to liberal idealism?

Porter: Yes. People who didn't like other people's views were apt to call them communists, when they were not at all.

Morris: It was a kind of inflammatory statement which could be used to political effect?

Elective and Volunteer Politics

- Morris: You said that, although you were on the delegation scheduled to go to the '48 convention, you didn't go because your husband was ill. I wondered how ill he was.
- Porter: He had a number of pneumonias from which he recovered, then he had pneumonia and he died a year or so later. He recovered from the pneumonias and he was still practicing when he died.
- Morris: He was ill with pneumonia, so you didn't go to the convention.
- Porter: Yes. Bill Malone says the '44 was the most exciting convention. But the '48 was a very exciting convention with I think the southerners trying to oust Truman. I think Truman's stand on civil rights-- being for civil rights in '48 was being courageous and something that the south could not tolerate.
- Morris: You mentioned two things I'd like to check with you on. In '44 you said you decided you really didn't want to put the time and money into the kind of travels that were needed to be national committeewoman, and then in '48 your husband's health was more important to you than going to the convention. Do you feel that those kinds of decisions affected your own political career?
- Porter: I don't think so. I'm still participating, as you know, where I'm interested. I don't think the kind of thing I did could be called a political career, compared with Helen's running for Congress. Any woman running for state office--a woman who does the official party thing is not like a woman who's a legislator; that is the political career which depends on your whole outlook.
- Morris: At some point in those years did you think of running for political office?
- Porter: I was asked to, and I would have had backing.
- Morris: Asked to run for Congress?
- Porter: Yes, at one time. But on these things, unless you pursue them, you don't get very far. There were people who would have backed me. I don't know in those days whether I could have won; but I definitely am not of the stuff of which candidates are made. I cannot bear to hear myself making the same speech seven times in an evening. I am the stuff of which appointees are made [laughter] and I have been appointed frequently.
- Morris: That's an interesting distinction. What do you think are the qualities that make a good candidate, besides being able to repeat oneself

Morris: indefinitely?

Porter: I think it's the dedication; I think it's a full-time dedication. I don't think a congressman works eight hours a day and goes home to her home.

Of course, in this period my husband had died. I was going to say I wanted my home life. But my marriage did come before any political career. I always did at least two other things. I don't know whether I told you before that a former president of the League of Women Voters said to me, when I became president: After this, you have no place to go.

I decided I never would take one thing so seriously that I had no place to go.

Morris: Did she mean that there was no place in the League after you'd been president?

Porter: No--in the community. She felt that was the greatest accomplishment a woman could achieve, a real accolade. But I was on the board of the Crocker Home; I was vice president; I was doing a big job there. I was in the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association; I was vice president there. So I did have a balance.

In the years where I was chairman with my own secretary, then I had to tuck in--I mean the Crocker--Planning and Housing; etc.

Morris: You dropped off the board?

Porter: Oh, no.

Morris: You stayed on the Board? Good for you. That's quite a load to carry.

Porter: I seem to have had a great deal of energy.

State Central Committee Operations: Liaison and Continuity

Morris: How long did you serve as chairman of the northern division?

Porter: I think it was four years. I'd been there a while, and then there was the Olson to-do, when I resigned. Then I came back for two years. Then, after that, I was congressional chairman.

Morris: Does that relate to candidates and campaigns for Congress?

Porter: Yes, and also organization. The headquarters were here. I was succeeded by a woman from Alameda County whose name was Mrs. Rock; she was not back and forth as much. Then she was succeeded by a Sacramento woman whose name was Ruth Dodds, who was a very fine person and a splendid leader. But she lived in Sacramento, and here was the daily work going on in San Francisco.

Morris: So that you continued to be of assistance to the Northern California chairman.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did you go on the county central committee at all?

Porter: No. That was another place--I'll get some more coffee.

Morris: That will give me a chance to put a new tape on.

[Tape 6 begins]

Morris: You said that the Democratic offices were in the Balboa Building?

Porter: Yes, at Market and Second.

Morris: Was that the State Central Committee and also the women's division?

Porter: Yes--everything. The secretary by that time had become part of the organization. Harold McGrath was then the general manager; they had to have somebody there all of the time to coordinate. Mowitza Biddle, who came in as my secretary, then became general secretary--

Morris: This was the job Mr. McGrath had had before.

Porter: No. She was in the office under him. The women chairmen don't seem to have secretaries any more; they seem to go to the pool.

Morris: So that nowadays the women's division and other activities are more or less merged.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: At the time there was a women's division with a staff and with people like you directing it, was there a separate category called men's division?

Porter: No. The men--you just took it for granted they were the division.

- Porter: [Laughter] The women's division was a satellite; the men's division 'was'.
- Morris: Did you feel that this was a second-class or associate position for the women?
- Porter: No. Politics is a tremendously exciting, vital thing. In those days, there was a great division on issues and a great effort to get certain kinds of programs. The people who were working together didn't differ--the women had certain things to do that the men did not, and maybe that was in recruiting volunteers, which in those days were needed for campaigns.
- Morris: Volunteers were mostly women?
- Porter: Yes. The men were working.
- Morris: That's true, but most doorbell ringing is done on weekends and at nights, isn't it?
- Porter: Yes, but the only time you had to ring doorbells was when you had a campaign, and if you didn't have some kind of liaison between times, it's very hard to build up for each campaign. For instance, there was a Democratic congressman and there were Democratic assemblymen; we were there supporting them all together.
- Morris: In other words, you didn't go out and set up separate committees for Charley in this district and John in this district?
- Porter: An assemblyman would have specific people working in his district, and frequently there were people who wanted to work for just one candidate. Then the congressman had his district--people who were working there-- and maybe some of them also worked in the other congressional districts.
- But there was a cohesiveness. The State Central Committee, or the local organization, was there backing these candidates.
- Morris: Were there close working relations with the county central committee?
- Porter: There were close relations with the chairman of the county central committee. Most of the members were doing their specific thing. A young woman who came to work in the Shelley campaign, who was very bright and well organized, said to me one day, "Will you please tell me about the Democratic party?" [Laughter] She was working in headquarters. And I said, "Mary Frances, there are many mansions in the Democratic party," and I will say that to you.
- Morris: The county central committee seems to be a source of great mystery

Morris: to the non-political public, which is why I'm interested.

Porter: I wasn't on it, but I think it didn't meet too often.

Morris: Were there any women on it?

Porter: Yes. There was one woman whose name was Mrs. Elizabeth Collins. She ran without the blessing of the men, and she was an old-time Irish lady politician. She put her name on the ballot as "E. Collins" and you couldn't beat that in San Francisco. Nobody knew she was a woman until she arrived. [Laughter]

Morris: E. Collins ran an independent campaign and got elected!

Porter: She did, yes. She just put her name on the ballot. She was in a district where the name Collins or Murphy or Sullivan or O'Brien was very good.

Morris: Was there usually much competition for seats on the county committee?

Porter: In that era there was not; later there became a lot of competition. I think Agar Jacks (who, incidentally, is married to a niece of Mrs. Roosevelt, and is a television producer) is head of it now, and he's been head for a number of years, which would indicate to me that there hadn't been too much competition, or you'd have new leadership.

Morris: It sounds as if it's customary for the same person to continue as chairman for quite a long time.

Porter: There is, unless a new group takes over.

Morris: In general, in working on these various Democratic committees, did you feel that your opinions and suggestions were listened to in party decision-making?

Porter: I did. Like the time we sat in Bob Kenny's office and selected the candidates in 1946.

Morris: Would they in general--Bill Malone and the other men--would they consult with you or wait for you to give your opinion?

Porter: We had these executive meetings where there'd be general discussion. I have known Bill Malone to say: What do you think of so-and-so?--be perfectly quiet, and then suddenly: Why do you think that?

That would mean that I had disturbed his thinking or there was something new.

Morris: Is this his general approach?

Porter: Anything that would strengthen the Democratic party--anybody.

Prospective Candidates and the California Democratic Council

Morris: Did you, in the course of your activities, keep an eye out for people who might be likely candidates?

Porter: [Pause] We were delighted when Pauline Davis was appointed and ran. We were delighted with Dorothy Donohue from Fresno or down there ran. But I didn't go around and say to women: You must run for office.

Morris: Were there many women who thought they might like to try it?

Porter: Not at that time. We still don't seem to have them. We're having women's lib, but they don't produce candidates. Why don't they get qualified women and get behind them? There is a young woman running for Supervisor here in San Francisco and she, unfortunately, hasn't a political connection. I offered to help her--and the best way I could help her would be to suggest that she go to the chairman of the State Central Committee and see what she could do for her.

Woman or no woman, if you haven't been participating, you don't get the kind of help you need to win. Of course, she may get it; I hope she'll win.

Morris: Every now and then an independent does make it.

Porter: Yes. I would say to anyone: run if you really want to and work hard, and if you're defeated, accept it and go back the next time. The chances are six out of ten you'll make it. Pat Brown ran several times for district attorney; and he ran twice for attorney general.

Morris: In general, male or female, do candidates emerge on their own, or is there some process by which party leaders are looking out for likely people.

Porter: George Miller from Contra Costa County had the idea that Dick Graves would be the ideal candidate for governor in 1954. So, he went around and talked to everybody with a vote urging support for Dick Graves. There was a consensus that Dick Graves would be a good candidate.

Morris: That was early in the life of the California Democratic Council. Wasn't there some trouble at that convention in terms of--?

Porter: I don't know; I don't remember whom they supported. That's where

Porter: Alan Cranston got into Democratic politics. He got in through the Council.

Morris: The date I have is that the Council began about 1953.

Porter: And didn't you have that Alan was one of the leaders?

Morris: This was the question I had--was he one of the organizers or did he come into it and then become a leader?

Porter: I think he gave a great deal of help to it in organizing.

Morris: Where did the idea come from?

Porter: I think people who are active felt they were outside the party; they were going to have their own organization and their own power. I think that there was some blessing of the party for it, and then I think, when it got very independent and competitive, that there was a difference.

Morris: Clara Shirpser was then the national committeewoman from California. I understand that she was quite involved in getting it started. Is that your recollection?

Porter: I think she had something to do with it.

Morris: That would be kind of a large task on top of other kinds of things that a national committeewoman is doing, wouldn't it?

Porter: She probably would give it her blessing in a certain era, and the committeewoman does have prestige and power.

Alan Cranston ran for controller when the Democratic sweep came. But if he hadn't been so active, he wouldn't have been known and he probably wouldn't have been a candidate. When he ran for controller he had the blessing--I think he did--of this group.

Morris: He used it as a political base for his own candidacy?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did you feel that the Democratic Council was a help or a hindrance to the Democratic party activities that you spent so much time on?

Porter: I remember going to Fresno to one of their conventions. There were areas in which they were helpful; that is, when they agreed and we were working together. When they were opposing, they were not helpful.

Morris: That's an interesting rule of thumb, yes.

Porter: You know that, in politics, you work together on one campaign, you work with somebody else in the next campaign. People frequently take different paths.

People were tremendously interested in the Council, feeling that they couldn't be a delegate to the convention in Sacramento but they could be a delegate to the Council. And they were feeling they had a direct participation. Mary Hutchison had been a woman with an important position in government who told me about how much she enjoyed it and that they did just exactly what the party convention was doing at Sacramento.

There was a bitter fight in the Council when Alan--I think the Council wanted Alan Cranston for senator, but Pierre Salinger came out and ran, and Pierre got the nomination.

Morris: Was there much overlap, as you recall, between official party delegates to Sacramento and the Democratic Council members?

Porter: I think some of the delegates were involved with the Council also.

Morris: It must have organized and moved ahead quite quickly. It was 1954 that Alan Cranston was elected controller, only a year after the Council was founded; that's a fairly speedy political organization and development of enough strength to elect a candidate, isn't it?

Porter: In those days, the slate was chosen. Alan had no opposition, Pat Brown had no opposition--who was the Lieutenant governor, do you remember?

Morris: Edward Roybal from Southern California. I believe that the Democratic Council did endorse Dick Graves for governor, but then my understanding is that there was quite a to-do with the Central Committee. There were people in Southern California who were not happy with the endorsement, and there was also this question that was beginning to surface again about the Board of Equalization. I wonder if that's your recollection?

Porter: I told you George Miller, who was the assemblyman from Contra Costa and a very important figure in state politics, was a leader. It was he who wanted Dick Graves. I think some of the professionals--we didn't have a candidate--were really waiting with interest to see what would happen, and they were not as surprised.

Morris: When Graves got the nomination?

Porter: No, when he was defeated.

Morris: How likely a potential candidate was George Killion?

Porter: Oh, he wouldn't be a candidate.

Morris: I've got some press clippings; I think it was Arthur Caylor and a couple of other columnists that were talking about Mr. Killion.

Porter: For governor?

Morris: Right. In '54.

Porter: I don't know. I think George Killion would have gotten the nomination if he'd wanted it, because he stood for power in the Democratic party, he was a very important person nationally, he would attract a great deal of money for the campaign--and you have to have money to run a campaign. If people do not think the candidate has a chance of winning, it's hard to get money.

I think George Killion was treasurer of the national committee at one time, and he's always been one of the major figures in the Democratic party and an excellent candidate.

Morris: In what area were his responsibilities?

Porter: Not having definite responsibilities but coming in with the support of important people, seeing that money is raised.

Morris: As treasurer of the national committee, would this mean that he'd be consulted on decisions being made in the California party as well as at the national level?

Porter: I think at that time he was saying to California: You raise more money. [Laughter]

It was his job to get money for the national committee and he had forty-eight states at that time. The need for money is inexhaustible.

Morris: Yes, it's chronic in politics. Is most of the money raised by the Democratic committee rather than by individual contacts?

Porter: It goes both ways; it's the many mansions again. Sometimes somebody you've never known was interested, you'll suddenly find is a large contributor.

Morris: They just give on an impulse for a specific candidate?

Porter: Well, they suddenly become interested.

Morris: Is this also part of continuing party activities--sounding out and

Morris: looking for potential contributors?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: How about national campaigns? Were these a regular part of your political activities?

Porter: The last one I did a major job in was 1960. I was co-vice chairman in Northern California of Citizens for Kennedy. Red Fay was the other vice chairman.

Admiral Harlee was the chairman and he didn't know anything about politics. Fay knew little enough about local politics so I did most of the organization and I'd have to go in and tell them things they just couldn't do without offending people here.

We had no money--that's what Citizens for Kennedy was to do; raise some. We had a headquarters that someone had donated and borrowed expert people for staff.

Morris: Do you recall who they were?

Porter: As I remember, Bob Halinie loaned Ted Palmer to do public relations and George Killion loaned a top rate secretary. A couple of people who were donated to me gave us a few hundred dollars for expenses.

That Kennedy campaign was something. It started slowly; it took time for the devotion to develop that became the hallmark of the Kennedy years. The Kennedys sent just cartons of mail out from Hyannisport, that had come from California. The first thing we did was set up a system for answering it all. We finally had enough money to hire some people to help; what we'd do is pay people who were devoted to Kennedy and needed the money. As the momentum grew, we got more and more people who wanted to help--more volunteers than I've ever known before. There were enough to do all the chores that nowadays most campaigns have to pay for.

Ted was the Kennedys' representative in San Francisco, and he loved us. Citizens for Kennedy just basked in his approval. He was very young then, charming and gay and delightful.

And I remember election night, all those volunteers were really keyed up--Admiral Harlee thanked them all for their help, and was going to close the office at 6 o'clock. I went right to him and said: You just don't do that on election night.

And he said he wasn't going to have drunks all over the office. But I told him that a sense of final participation in the vote count

Porter: was important to all those volunteers.

Morris: What happened?

Porter: Bob Halinie came to the rescue and paid for a room at the Palace with TV and a direct line to where the votes were being tallied. He paid for hors d'oeuvres too.

Morris: You have a handsome picture of yourself and Kennedy at a dinner during the campaign. [See illustration] You're deep in conversation; would you remember what you were talking about?

Porter: That would have been the inner group that sits with the candidate at dinner. We were probably talking about the newspaper people saying he was too young to be President. JFK repudiated that idea, saying that Teddy Roosevelt had been a young President.

We probably mentioned campaign issues, too. He was a very pleasant dinner companion, and he had amazing recall. I told him that I had met his sister Eunice ten years before at a meeting when I was on the Alderson prison board and she was his Congressional hostess. We talked about Alderson and her work with organizations for Catholic girls. It made you feel as if you really had a connection with the Kennedys.

Morris: What a nice experience to remember.

VII SAN FRANCISCO MAYORAL ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS, 1943-1975

Roger Lapham's Campaign and Administration

- Morris: With the state elections and the national election committees that you worked on, did you have time to also be active in local elections-- mayor and board of supervisors?
- Porter: Yes. The local picture is non-partisan. After the bitter fight at Sacramento on the State Central Committee, the Reilly-Malone fight (which was a very close race) Roger Lapham ran for mayor of San Francisco. Mr. Malone supported him and I supported him. Many of the people from the Democratic party who were opposed to Mr. Reilly supported him. Mr. Reilly also ran for mayor.
- Morris: Yes, I remember that that was the source of their disagreement, that Reilly wanted to run for mayor. It sounds like Mr. Malone's judgment was right; the voters elected Mr. Lapham.
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: How does this work out? If the local elections are non-partisan, how does the Democratic organization get involved in the campaigns of the candidates that it prefers?
- Porter: They can do it on a nonpartisan basis. We have at the present time [1975] three Democrats and two Republicans running. The Republican County Committee endorsed both our candidates, Mr. Marks and Mr. Barbagelata. The Democrats endorsed Mr. Moscone. [Laughter]
- Morris: At the Democratic County Committee?
- Porter: Yes, which they had no business doing; the thing has always been non-partisan. They could have worked for him; these things can be done without violating the image of non-partisanship.

Morris: The Citizens Committee for So-and-So sort of thing.

Porter: Yes, or they can just go and ring doorbells. But people don't ring them as much over here.

Morris: It gets to be quite a chore.

Porter: Yes. I have done some postcards for a candidate who's a friend of mine, but I think that's the nearest to the personal thing.

Morris: Is this one of the reasons that the local elections are technically nonpartisan--because there are more personal kinds of relationships and acquaintances?

Porter: No. I think years ago the pattern was agreed upon in this city. It used to save time, until now when we have the runoff; the person with the largest number of votes was elected. Now you have to have fifty percent, so there will be a runoff this time.

Morris: Going back to Roger Lapham running against George Reilly, do you remember what the differences were in their platforms?

Porter: I don't remember the platforms. But Roger Lapham was a very successful businessman. He'd had some important Washington appointment during the war, and it was still during the war. He was a man really of renown. Mr. Reilly was just a member of the Board of Equalization.

Morris: You didn't perceive the Board of Equalization as providing much political expertise?

Porter: No. Also, as far as I'm concerned, one man had vast experience to offer and the other man had limited experience.

Morris: There were some press reports that George Reilly's support and his approach to government would go back to the kind of politics of Angelo Rossi. The press reports gave the impression that that was not a good thing. What was there about Mayor Rossi?

Porter: He was good in his era, but his era had passed. During the war, he made the major mistake--I think we had a submarine in the water, and I don't know whether there was a threat of a bomb being dropped here. So Rossi, in meeting the press, said: Well, why should you be disturbed? No bombs fell.

No bombs had fallen, but can you see what the press did with that remark in 1943? We were having blackouts here. Immediately it was made to seem as if the mayor were cavalier about it. People thought that a man with wide business experience would be better--

Porter: Roger Lapham. We had two railways; we had a municipal and we had a privately owned railway. He did put over a bond issue, a charter amendment, to buy the privately-owned railway. So we have just one railway.

Also in those war years, the streetcars were so crowded that people smashed windows on them in the Forest Hill-St. Francis Wood district they were so frustrated with the bad service. A man who was working on one of the weekly papers started a petition to recall Roger Lapham.* So the forces lined up; people were just furious with government--it was wartime, there was rationing, the transportation was bad, gasoline was rationed. There were a lot of people that would recall the angel Gabriel. [Laughter]

Morris: Quite a lot of people had moved to San Francisco just because of war jobs. Did that make a difference in whether the services stretched? Could the city serve more people?

Porter: I think equipment was breaking down. There were more people, and the service wasn't what people wanted. They worked hard, they were tired.

The man who managed Lapham's campaign against the recall had these big billboards: Are you going to elect the faceless man? Because they hadn't put up anybody against him.

Morris: The faceless man was Clem Whitaker's idea.

Porter: I think Roger Lapham's mistake was saying he would only run for one term. To run for one term politically is fine, but never say it because you lose your power the minute you go into office. People say: He is not going to be there very long. Well, Roger Lapham, who really took the job idealistically, said he would run for one term. Mr. Barclay [Earl], who started the recall of Lapham probably would have been content to let him have his term and then defeat him if Roger Lapham had not committed himself to one term.

After the recall election, his commissioners gave Roger Lapham a dinner. He said to us: I am the only mayor in the history of San Francisco who's run twice for one term. [Laughter]

That was a different era; everybody was much older. Those

*The paper was a shopping news which later became the Progress, considered by some to give the best coverage of local news.

- Porter: commissioners were really the leading citizens of San Francisco. To be a Lapham appointee meant that you had community status.
- Morris: Did you expect that he would wish to appoint you after he was elected?
- Porter: I didn't know.
- Morris: Were you hoping that he would?
- Porter: No. There was one thing I was interested in--planning--because I'd been very active in the San Francisco Housing and Planning Association. When I was asked if I would take an appointment, I said: Only on the Planning Commission.
- I didn't want anything else. I didn't want to be just any commissioner; I wanted to be a planning commissioner, and if I were not, I wanted to still work in planning.
- Morris: With the Planning and Housing Association. How many women appointments did he make?
- Porter: I will try to remember. I remember Gladys Moore; she was on the Recreation Commission (it's now Park and Recreation; there was no woman on the Park Commission). Mildred Prince and I think Ruth Turner were on the Social Welfare; I don't know what it was called then. Martha Gerbode was coordinator on something to do with the juvenile work.
- Morris: Was there a juvenile justice committee in those days, too?
- Porter: No. It was a board, not a commission. Now let me see. Then Mrs. Musante was on the Board of Permit Appeals.
- Morris: That's a powerful spot, isn't it?
- Porter: Yes, and there never had been a woman there before. I remember, though, when we were doing this party, Mrs. Lapham was just in spasms of joy, feeling the women had achieved something, because the invitations were to Commissioner and Dr. Charles B. Porter, Commissioner and Mr. Joseph Moore. [Laughter]
- Morris: That's lovely. Mrs. Moore--is that the steamship family?
- Porter: Yes. Ruth Turner was Hastings and Company. Mildred Prince was the leading Republican lady, and her husband was Pillsbury, Madison and Sutro.
- Morris: And Martha Gerbode had been on your League of Women Voters board?

Porter: Yes. She was Martha Alexander of Honolulu. Martha died just recently; the thing she did was to save Diamond Head. She's the Alexander and Baldwin family--tremendously wealthy.

Morris: It looks as if Mayor Lapham made an effort to be bi-partisan and also male and female balanced. Were there any Asians or blacks at that point?

Porter: There were two women on the Board of Education.

Morris: Appointed by the mayor?

Porter: Yes. In those days, there were no blacks. There was a tradition: you had a labor man on every commission.

Morris: How did that tradition get started?

Porter: They had a labor mayor here in 1906 or '07 whose name was McCarthy. San Francisco has always been a labor-oriented city.

Morris: Were there any other groups besides labor that the tradition held should be represented in city government?

Porter: No. In that era, the community leaders were the people who were appointed to these positions, and since there were a number of community leaders, there was a wide choice.

Morris: In other words, you were a community leader first and then suitable for appointment.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: It seems to me as if there was a fair number of women; was this a special thing that Lapham felt was needed?

Porter: There had been women there, and there was always a woman on the Planning Commission. The first woman was Mrs. Parker Maddox. Then she died, and a Mrs. Stokes came. Then I was on in the Lapham era. When Elmer Robinson became mayor, he had his own commissioners and he appointed Mildred Prince. Then when George Christopher became mayor, he appointed me.

Morris: But only one?

Porter: Only one woman.

Morris: Roger Lapham only wanted to serve for one term, so that you were aware this was a lame duck mayor from the beginning.

Porter: Yes. But at the time, you were so interested going on the commission that it didn't make a difference.

[Pause to turn over tape]

Morris: Gardiner Dailey served with you on the Planning Commission when you were first there. He goes back to the original planning commission, doesn't he?

Porter: No. That was 1919.

Morris: Who else was on it?

Porter: Michel Weill, who was president of the White House; Mr. Weinberger (Cap's father), who was a lawyer and who died about six months after his appointment and was replaced by Morgan Gunst; George Johns was the labor man; and I was the woman.

In 1919, when that commission was established, a woman was put on it.

Morris: That's interesting that there was an awareness.

Porter: There hadn't been a woman on Permit Appeals, but Roger Lapham appointed one.

Morris: Is the Board of Permit Appeals one that works closely with the Planning Commission?

Porter: They can overrule it on an appeal. So they really frequently do not work closely at all.

Morris: Yes. Is there ever a member of either Permit Appeals or Planning Commission appointed to the other body?

Porter: No.

Morris: They're totally separate.

Porter: There was a matter that was very important to us of subdividing some lots on Union Street. The pattern of the lots was 37 1/2 foot frontage, and this builder or developer who removed a house, wanted to build row townhouses of twenty-two feet. I remember going to the Permit Appeals. Peter Boudores does not like advice from outside commissioners, but I said: You know I very seldom do this, but I feel it's so important to San Francisco.

Porter: Then I gave the exact size of the lots on one side of the street and on the other. Well, all Cow Hollow was up in arms because if one house could be taken down by the bulldozer, they could begin to change the whole area. But the Board of Permit Appeals did vote in our favor.

Morris: I have a couple more mayor questions, and then I thought that we could get into the Planning Commission next week.

Elmer Robinson's Election and Administration

Morris: In 1947, as Lapham was completing his first term, there were three candidates for mayor. One was Franck Havenner--

Porter: Yes, and I supported him.

Morris: Why did he decide to not run for Congress again?

Porter: He was in the middle of his term, was he not?

Morris: That's right; it would not be a congressional year.

Porter: No. But like the present mayor's race, they all will retreat to security. [Laughter]

Morris: He wouldn't lose his present position?

Porter: No--Diane Feinstein goes back to the Board of Supervisors, the two state senators can go to Sacramento, my candidate can go back to the bench, and Mr. Barbagelata--

Morris: Will stay on as Supervisor. I see. So did Franck Havenner really want to be mayor?

Porter: Yes, he wanted to be mayor.

Morris: And there was Chester McPhee and Elmer Robinson.

Porter: Oh, did McPhee run?

Morris: He's in the newspaper clipping, and he's listed as running with Roger Lapham's support. I have a memory of having seen Mr. McPhee's name as a public administrator.

Porter: He was a Supervisor; I'd forgotten he ran for mayor. Chester McPhee was appointed chief administrative office [CAO] by George Christopher, and he had to resign because of some conflict of interest.

Morris: What kind of a campaign for mayor did he run? How strong a candidate was he?

Porter: I don't know. It was during that campaign that I had to go east in the middle of it, and I remember somebody saying that everybody in the Havenner campaign was going someplace else instead of working.

Morris: Then the third candidate was Elmer Robinson.

Porter: It was Elmer Robinson, Havenner and McPhee. McPhee should have taken votes from Robinson, not from Havenner.

Morris: What kind of a campaign did Mr. Robinson run?

Porter: I don't know, but I imagine it was very good because he'd been very important in the Republican organization. He knew politics and he got elected; it must have been good.

Morris: He campaigned on 'It's time for a change at city hall,' which is rather odd when his predecessor only served one term.

Porter: [Laughter] I know. They all do it. George Moscone is carrying on like a flaming hero, saying he's getting rid of all commissioners; every mayor gets rid of all commissioners, only nobody's rude enough to say it beforehand. They just say: Thanks very much. I'm appointing so-and-so in your place.

Morris: Even though commissioners usually have staggered terms?

Porter: Look, the charter reads there are to be so many terms. But these people serve at the pleasure of the mayor. George Moscone has stirred up so much indignation that very important people tell me they will not resign. Well, they will have to resign.

Now, personally, I have no problem because my term expires a week after the mayor's. But if it didn't, I wouldn't serve under a mayor who didn't want me, and I wouldn't serve under a mayor whose principles and policies I was not in reasonable agreement with. I don't think you have to be an absolute echo, but I think if what the mayor stands for is not what you stand for, then you shouldn't serve under him.

Morris: Then why did the press make such a to-do over Mayor Robinson appointing so many new commissioners?

Porter: I think Robinson announced that he wanted the resignations of the Planning Commission because Michel Weill, president of the Commission, was completing an agreement with the Stonesons in which we'd rezone the land from single family to multiple use, providing they only covered ten percent of the land and no higher than ten stories, provided a parking space for every unit (unheard of in that time), and

Porter: put up a \$100,000 bond for landscaping.

Morris: This is what turned out to be Stonestown?

Porter: Yes. I think Mayor Robinson felt that he was coming in and that this should be something he would do. We felt that we had worked on it for a year, and we--

Morris: You wanted the credit for it, of course.

Porter: No--we wanted to finish it; you stop that kind of thing and it takes another year for another group of people to work it out, if they work it out at all. Maybe we felt that we were getting the most that anybody had ever gotten. We worked on it; it was ready for completion. So the mayor said that the Planning Commission was out; he was shouting that.

Carolyn Anspacher called me, and I was just not watching my words. She said: Did the mayor ask for your resignation? I said: No, but he has a perfect right to have his own people.

She said: You mean to say he didn't tell you a word? I said: All I know is what I read in the newspaper, repeating that old one.

She said: Well, I'm in flames! I said: Oh, not at all. The man just has bad manners and no knowledge of the amenities. Well, of course, I said it off the top of my head and it was a good line. It was on every radio station, it was on the front page of the newspaper, and my husband, for the only time in his life, was disgusted with me. [Laughter] I had no business to say it.

"At the Pleasure of the Mayor"

Morris: It's interesting that this was the accepted theory--that the mayor should be able to appoint completely new boards and commissioners, when state commissions have a staggered turnover--

Porter: Governor Brown removed somebody from some commission whose term expired in 1977. The man went to court; the court upheld Governor Brown. So there must be the same clause that these people can serve at the pleasure of the governor.

Look, I do think the new mayor should have his own people.

Morris: As a counterbalance to the fact that he's got a Board of Supervisors

Morris: that are responsible only to themselves?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: It gives him a weight of numbers.

Porter: The Supervisors are the legislative board; they don't know it; they think they're administrators. [Laughter] Their job is legislation; they're trying to get into administration. Under the mayor comes the CAO, the head of the Department of Public Works, and the Commission, which is appointed by him.

I don't know that Elmer Robinson swept all the commissions because they always have friends who support them, and if they happen to be on commissions, they're apt to retain them. But when George Christopher came in--you saw the note in which he was asking for the PUC resignation--he appointed a whole new Planning Commission. When Jack Shelley came in, he retained two of the planning commissioners.

Morris: One of the planning commissioners had happened to work on both Mayor Christopher's campaign and Mayor Shelley's campaign.

Porter: Yes. Then when Joe Alioto came in, some of the commissioners had supported Harold Dodds, some had supported Alioto, and it was the same thing.

Morris: So Alioto replaced a good number, then.

Porter: He took quite a while to do it. I think he replaced fewer.

I think it's unfortunate that this be made a campaign issue. Of course, I know George Moscone who really is a very pleasant person. George thinks this is getting him votes, which it may, because since Watergate, all people in public office, I think, are being viewed with great distrust and dislike.

Morris: Including commissioners?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Does it make the work of the boards and commissions more political if appointments to them are being used as a political campaign issue?

Porter: We're trying to get our job done. I have never heard it made a campaign issue before.

Morris: Except for Robinson.

Porter: No, he didn't say he was throwing out the commissioners, did he?

Morris: Press reports that I saw came after he was elected mayor and before he took office in December.

Porter: But he didn't campaign, as George Moscone is campaigning. And here Diane Feinstein moves in the other day and promises to remove the Board of Permit Appeals and supplant the Planning Commission with neighborhood people. Those are not the issues, or shouldn't be in San Francisco. The issues are what the mayor is going to stand for and what kind of leadership he or she is going to give.

Morris: Did you say that you felt that the boards and commissions should be political?

Porter: No, dear. I did say, though, I thought if you were a commissioner you shouldn't serve under a mayor whose policies and program you were in disagreement with.

Morris: Even for the sake of having your point of view represented in the discussion?

Porter: No. I think the mayor should have a chance to put his program into effect. A commissioner isn't elected; nobody elected him or her. But they are there to try to make the government work, not to think that they should go off on their own, as if to set their own program up in contradiction to the mayor.

I know as far as I'm concerned, if the mayor were doing something that interfered with planning, I would resign. He was elected; I wasn't elected.

Morris: That's a very interesting statement of your point of view. Is that similar to your thinking about the Democratic party in general, in terms of voting for the party candidates and working within the Democratic party? That it's the program that's more important than any individual?

Porter: Yes, but I wouldn't support a candidate I didn't believe in. I'd just walk away.

Morris: And sit that election out.

Mayor-Planning Commission Relationships

Morris: How did Robinson do as a mayor? Did you keep an eye on the Planning Commission, and how did you feel?

Porter: He had trouble with the Planning Commission. The director of planning resigned to form the Department of Planning at the University--Jack Kent.

They were really good people on the commission; nobody could be more intelligent than Mildred Prince. There was a man whose name I think was Towle who was very good. There was one man that didn't turn out so well whose name was Ernest Torregano; he proved a great embarrassment to Mayor Robinson. His wife had some kind of a mental lapse. Anyway, he ended up by saying that he had two votes on the commission, one as president and one as a commissioner. So he had a lapse.

The Commission asked the mayor to select the new director of planning, and he got a very fine man whose name was Paul Opperman who fought the Commission for six years (he called it the Anti-Planning Commission.)

Morris: Oh dear! So that in that case, the mayor and his commission were not in agreement.

Porter: I think they were in agreement; I mean when he put Paul Opperman in there, he got a good planner and a good director. After that, it was up to Paul Opperman and the Commission--

Morris: To get along with each other.

Porter: I think Paul Opperman was more liberal in his views than the Commission.

Morris: It sounds like Robinson had some different standards for picking his commissioners than picking his department heads.

Porter: Planning is a professional thing. Robinson is an intelligent man. I think he wouldn't do anything but get the best available.

Morris: He served two terms. And then, where did Mr. Christopher come from?

Porter: He came from the Board of Supervisors. In his campaign, he said: Paul Opperman is my director of planning. [Laughter]

Morris: During the campaign?

Porter: Yes. He liked and admired Opperman. You see, the director of planning is the appointee of the Planning Commission; the secretary is the appointee. They are not civil service.

Morris: That was quite a bipartisan committee that announced George Christopher's candidacy. I think he was a Republican, and you were on his campaign committee.

- Porter: I was his Democratic lady, and there was a Republican. I was his co-chairman, and there was a Republican lady who was the other.
- Morris: Jack Shelley and Ed Heller were on his committee, too, and they're pretty powerful Democrats. What led you knowledgeable Democrats to--?
- Porter: We thought he was good.
- Morris: Did it cause any difficulties in Democratic circles?
- Porter: Oh, yes. The president of the Waitresses Union told me what she thought of my supporting a Republican. [Laughter]
- Morris: She didn't think much of it?
- Porter: No. And then she turned around and supported some Republican--I've forgotten who--in another election.
- Morris: Who else was running for mayor besides Christopher? This is '55.
- Porter: There was a J. Joseph Sullivan running.
- Morris: I'm not familiar with that name.
- Porter: He was a former planning commissioner under Lapham and a fine lawyer.
- Morris: Christopher was mayor for two terms. Then, in '63 we've got Jack Shelley, who is a congressman, deciding to run for mayor. Tell me about the fascination of being mayor of San Francisco.
- Porter: I don't know, because it's heartbreak house. I don't think you could find anyone more brilliant, more courageous, more intellectual, more gifted than Joe Alioto, and look what is happening to him at this moment. Of course, it's my considered opinion that about next February people are going to change their minds on this.
- Morris: About being mayor?
- Porter: No, about the attacks on Joe Alioto.
- Morris: Once he's out of office.
- Porter: Yes. I think they're going to realize what he did. Being a commissioner in the Lapham era, in the Christopher era, in the Shelley era, is very different. Do you realize the difference in the complexion of San Francisco--the minorities who need help, the increase in people who are on welfare? Joe Alioto has sat on that powder keg, and we are getting along together.
- Morris: How much contact is there on the work of the Planning Commission

Morris: between a commissioner and the mayor?

Porter: The mayor doesn't really interfere with the Commission.

Morris: I wasn't thinking of it so much as interfering as--you've touched on a couple of topics that we'll go into next time, but I was thinking of a commissioner as an adviser to the mayor and as getting through to the mayor. This is the kind of thinking that we're getting from the community and from staff sort of information.

Porter: In certain matters, we have asked for a meeting with the mayor to discuss a problem with him. But I think he knows that we have these neighborhood problems, that we have these institutional problems where the institutions have to grow. I notice Berkeley having a very bad one.

Morris: Are you thinking of our traffic diverter program?

Porter: No, I'm thinking of Alta Bates Hospital. It was on television last evening--all the neighbors picketing their lovely little quiet neighborhood. Well, you do need hospitals; what are you going to do? But these things do come up.

When the Transamerica Building came before the Planning Commission, the director of planning disapproved of it. The commissioners thought it was a good thing. The mayor wrote a letter to the commissioners saying that he thought it was in the interest of San Francisco, and he hoped we'd vote for it--which I think he had a perfect right to do. He didn't say: If you don't vote for it, I'll dismiss you.

Then Jack Shelley, when he was worried about the freeways, said: How are you people feeling? I think this is important to San Francisco. We all did in this particular case. But Jim Kearney was the labor man, and labor was opposed to the freeways and voted against them.

Morris: So that in that sense, the mayor delegates these territories to the boards and commissions.

Porter: Yes. Between ninety and ninety-five percent of the votes of the Commission accept the recommendation of the director. The disagreement is not very great. Occasionally there is a disagreement in which the Commission will not agree with the director.

Morris: Is there a sense, do you think--thinking back through these different eras--in which the Planning Commission serves as a buffer zone to the mayor, or as a community sounding board?

Porter: I have said I thought we were a liaison between the people and the department that does the planning and brings it to us.

Morris: I was thinking of the last ten years or so, when it looks as if there's been an increase in the number of neighborhood groups and other citizen organizations pounding the table--if the Commission, in a sense, keeps some of this noise off the mayor.

Porter: Well, yes. I wish you could see a letter I have upstairs written--do you know what an EIR is?

Morris: Environmental Impact Report.

Porter: Yes, which has caused more difficulty and more trouble! We had recommendation from our staff that it was not needed in this case. People have the idea if you get a positive EIR, you can prevent something. You can't; you have to have discretionary review. But this abusive letter came because this man wanted to have us rule against the Doggie Diner. [Laughter] We've had the Doggie Diner on Thursday for years.*

Well, we were all opposed to the Doggie Diner because of its location on 19th Avenue, and also because it was taking four small businesses, which never get re-established, and we care very much about this.

This man representing the Council of District Merchants just tore us to pieces on a report the professional staff had made. So I wrote him a letter and said: Look, you don't want an EIR; you want discretionary review--

Morris: Before the report is in?

Porter: Yes. The EIR takes two to six months, it costs a tremendous amount of money, and when it's finished it says nothing; it doesn't say you can or you cannot build. But there is this kind of thing; I don't know why. We always worked with the neighborhoods; they were there, but they were never abusive the way they are now.

Thoughts on Women's Rights Over the Years

Morris: Those initials EIR remind me that I have a note to ask you about that

*The Planning Commission meets on Thursday afternoons, and the debate over a permit for this franchised food shop has been lengthy. Ed.

Morris: other set of initials, ERA--the Equal Rights Amendment. Have you observed this constitutional discussion?

Porter: Yes. It means that women gain certain things and they lose protection. But evidently women do wish to lose protection. I came along in an era when it was good to have women protected from longer hours. It's a different world now; nobody's having the long hours. There would be no place for child labor if it were permissible to have it. So I think, although I believe in women's rights and women having their own property, the right to a job and to get equal pay for equal work, I am not the kind of ultra feminist that feels that a woman should have an advantage over a man. I think she should have equality.

I think, in the Equal Rights Amendment, it is giving her equality, isn't it?

Morris: That's what I want to ask you. Do you feel it's worth the effort of a constitutional amendment?

Porter: In this climate, I think it is.

Morris: In that you've got to make the statement nowadays?

Porter: In which some women are going to such extremes. When I talked to a young woman on this women's committee that's been appointed--

Morris: This is the Mayor's Committee on the Status of Women?

Porter: Yes. She was so extreme that she wanted women to have all jobs, whether they're qualified or not. Now, I am not for having unqualified people--black, white, green or yellow--doing jobs. I think it's what puts us backward. If we can't use our best and give our best a chance, we're going to retrograde. This has been done in the minority groups, in the medical schools--sometimes qualified non-minorities have been passed over for unqualified minorities.

Morris: Have you been watching what looks to be a falling back in support for the ERA? There are reports that some legislatures that have approved the amendment are considering reconsidering it.

Porter: Then the women aren't very active in their states. Or the women don't want it. Of course, many women do not sympathize with the women's rights movement.

Morris: Is this something that the Democratic party per se, in an area like California, might well stay out of?

Porter: In talking to Goldie Cutler, who's head of the state women, the women

Porter: are evidently very vocal and working very hard for recognition.

Morris: Within the party?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: But not necessarily on the Equal Rights Amendment itself?

Porter: I haven't discussed that with her.

Morris: Did you say that you brought her into political activity?

Porter: Yes, in 1944. [Laughter]

Morris: Really?!

Porter: Her mother had been one of my chief lieutenants. Goldie worked in the Roosevelt campaign of 1944 when her husband was overseas.

Morris: And she had the time to put into it.

Porter: I think she worked professionally; I'm not sure. But she was there in '44.

Then she and her husband bought their home, had their children, who are now graduated from college. She used to help me on specific projects, and about six or seven years ago, she started working with groups here and became the leader. She's very competent. She's now state chairman of the women's division.

Morris: That's a marvelous continuity; it gives you a chance to keep up with what's going on now.

Porter: She sometimes tells me: I don't understand what's happening now. You were there. Every one of these women wants to be where you are.

Well, they all can't be there; all men can't be in the top place.

Morris: How does that work out? Do you find that somebody who also wanted the job that you've got, goes away mad and won't work at all on a campaign if they're not the top person?

Porter: No.

Morris: That's interesting. Are there any other women that you encouraged to become active in politics who are still carrying on the way Goldie Cutler is?

Porter: No. She's the one gem.



Mayor Roger Lapham's appointees and their spouses gather to honor him on his retirement. Mayor Lapham is fifth from left in front row. Julia Porter is third from his left, with hand raised. Dr. Charles Porter is in front of window, smoking a cigarette.



Mrs. Porter being sworn in as Planning Commissioner for Mayor Joe Alioto, January 16, 1968. Chet Born photograph.



Planning Commission, December 18, 1975. Standing, left to right: Hector Rueda, Mortimer Fleishacker, Thomas Meilon. Seated: Walter Newman and Julia Porter. San Francisco Public Utilities Commission photograph.

VIII EVOLUTION OF CITY PLANNING IN THE 1940s

[Date of interview V: 3 November 1975]

[Tape 7 begins]

Slums and Public Housing

Morris: Today I would like to talk about your career on the Planning Commission. Perhaps we could go back to the beginnings of your interest in planning.

Porter: When I was president of the League of Women Voters, some bright young man from the Junior Chamber of Commerce (and, in those days, there were a number of socially-minded people in the Junior Chamber of Commerce) wanted to get together or to re-establish something that was known as the San Francisco Housing Association. They wanted the interest of some of the League members. The League could not, as you know, without its own study or its being part of the program, endorse this. But the League members did have additional time.

In those days, the building codes, the housing provisions were so much more lax than they are today, and we really did have slums. Through this group, which included Jesse Coleman, who was a Supervisor, and his wife Florence, who was on the League board, the Morse Erskines and others, the San Francisco Housing Association was formed in 1943 with Morse Erskine and Julia Porter signing the incorporation papers. Its purpose was to put pressure on the Supervisors to get better housing laws, and we very quickly spilled over into the field of planning, which was a natural because Zoning controlled the housing standards.

Later on, it became the San Francisco Housing and Planning Association, and Catherine and Bill Wurster and Hervey Clark and Gardiner Dailey--a number of very prominent architects were part of it.

Porter: First we had an office in the PG&E Building on Sutter near Powell, for which I think we paid twenty-five dollars rent a month; that was in 1943. Then, later one, we moved to the Shreve Building and, at Catherine Wurster's suggestion, it became the Planning and Housing Association, instead of Housing and Planning.

Morris: Indicating that planning became a more important aspect of the work?

Porter: Yes, because we were supporting public housing, which was a very controversial subject. The fact that we said there were slums was bitterly denied by everybody--San Francisco had no slums! Other cities might.

You see, there was the federal money, but there was the local opposition--very strong to federal housing.

Morris: What kind of groups were involved in the opposition?

Porter: Everybody who owned a piece of property who thought it was jeopardized. Small people in neighborhoods.

The first project was out in the Mission. I think the next one was on Potrero Hill.

Morris: And did you say that the residents in those neighborhoods--

Porter: Bitterly resented them. I remember the budget was cut, and there weren't doors on the closets in the public housing projects. In the first project, out in the Mission (which was superb housing compared with what these people had lived in before), there wasn't money at that time for doors on the closets. So this became a major thing, that people wouldn't live well enough if they didn't have doors on closets. But the people in the project were successful; the neighbors had no difficulty with the public housing neighbors.

Then it went on to the other projects. I think Sunnyvale was the next one. I remember sitting at a statewide meeting of people representing the federal government and Los Angeles people saying they had to put on a campaign to get people to go in to public housing; they preferred their trailers or very bad housing. I remember in that era a great deal of discussion was given to color to make it more attractive.

But there was also the wartime housing, and there was some of the permanent public housing, which was really dreadful.

Morris: Would this be Hunters Point? Wasn't that built during World War II?

Porter: Yes. It's now been rebuilt and they have rather beautiful four-

Porter: bedroom, two-bath, shingled exterior--really better housing than many middle income people have.

I think throughout the country there was such an outcry about the dreadful highrise units--we had one on Golden Gate Avenue--that now they're doing the smaller units, they're doing very attractive buildings. In fact, they're comparable with private development.

There's a project on Arguello, between Clement and California, which I think is for senior citizens. It's about five stories. It's a very attractive building.

I was treasurer of the Housing Association; I was treasurer of the Housing and Planning; I was vice president for several years--I had some office in the organization under its various names. Because I had this interest and this knowledge of planning, Roger Lapham appointed me to the Planning Commission.

Morris: Who else was on the board of the Planning and Housing Association at that point?

Porter: Morse and Dorothy Erskine, Florence Soleman, I don't know whether Bill and Catherine Wurster--I think they came later. Hervey Clark came later, John Bolles.

Morris: I'm interested in why Mr. Lapham picked you?

Porter: Well, because in those days when you were appointed commissioner, you had to have somebody of community status who was known in the community. The Porters had been known for three generations in the community. I was former president of the League of Women Voters; my name had been in the papers, I was publicly known, I was known to have been part of the Housing and Planning Association. Since I had a background that I think very few women had, he appointed me.

Morris: Was Mayor Lapham familiar with the Burnham Plan that your brother-in-law had worked on?

Porter: I don't know whether he was, but he was cognizant of all of my background. When he went out of office, he asked the new mayor to meet his Planning Commission because he used to say: My Planning Commission, my best commission.

Morris: Did he have a particular interest in planning for the City of San Francisco?

Porter: I think he did. In those days, there was so much to do and we had so wide a horizon. There were two residential zones instead of five, as we now have them. The whole zoning code was simpler.

Porter: San Francisco was one of the early cities to have a Planning Commission. In 1920, the Planning Commission was established. Mrs. Parker Maddox, who was a very intelligent woman, was on the commission until she died. She was appointed and re-appointed. Then a Mrs. Stokes was on.

Morris: The women were generally re-appointed, as long as they were willing to serve?

Porter: I was appointed by Mayor Lapham. Mayor Robinson had his own Planning Commission. [Laughter]

Morris: I'm interested in how the idea of planning evolved. You said that you started with housing.

Porter: I think these are family things; years ago Bruce had been part of the Burnham Plan. I did live in an atmosphere of good and stimulating conversation. My brother-in-law, Robert Porter, who was a lawyer, was on the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Association board. You know there were many Italian immigrants arriving; they did need the neighborhood house. The housing there was shocking. I remember the tales of back stairs that were unsafe for people to go up and down.

Rob had been interested in some kind of good housing that Telegraph Hill had worked on. (That was Alice Griffith and Elizabeth Ash.) I think I was ripe when I was asked if I wouldn't come and join this group that these young men from the Chamber of Commerce were reinstating; why, it was just a natural.

The Burnham Plan and the Master Plan

Morris: Looking at the Burnham Plan briefly, that looks like it was primarily directed to the physical look of the city--public buildings and grace-drives.

Porter: Because of the Burnham Plan, we have the Park Presidio freeway, we have O'Shaughnessy Boulevard.

There was a city engineer whose name was O'Shaughnessy, who was an appointee of Mayor Rolph's. The legend is that he used to go into Mayor Rolph's office and bang the desk and say: This land will be set aside--because once you build on it, you have no chance. Keeping these roads open had to be done in the early times.

Morris: So O'Shaughnessy, the city engineer, was responsible for getting land reserved for some of the major boulevard kinds of roads and some open space. How did the physical-ceremonial-public aspect of the city get

Morris: combined with the concern for housing into a master plan?

Porter: I don't quite understand the question.

Morris: I have a note that it was in your first term on the Planning commission that a master plan was presented. Nowadays the master plan includes concern for housing and social services, as well as the traditional civic--

Porter: The master plan was something the Lapham commission asked the planning director for, and he would say: It's all there. I can throw it together in a week.

Well, he didn't. Then there was--I don't know whether it was federal money--we couldn't get money for a certain project without a master plan. The head of the Real Estate Board came in and said the Real Estate Board would make a master plan, which of course was anathema to the Planning Commission. But the Planning Commission immediately pressed the director.

Morris: Who was he?

Porter: Deming Tilton, who was a very imaginative and gifted man but not a hard administrator. So we said: What is lacking?

He had everything but the transportation section. How could we get the transportation section? A firm whose name was Woodruff and Sampson said they'd made a transportation plan for \$15,000.

Morris: That's a good sum of money in 1946, wasn't it?

Porter: Yes. They want half a million dollars now, if you can get anybody to go into it. But they did do a very good transportation plan. We went to the Supervisors for a special appropriation. So the master plan--this was the first master plan--was adopted. San Francisco could say it had a master plan, in order to get the funds, for what special projects, I do not know. That master plan would be looked upon with not distaste--horror--by the modern planners, because the master plan is so much more elaborate. And as years have gone on, planning, like every other sector of government, has enlarged its scope.

Morris: That's why I was interested in getting a picture of what it was in '45 and '46.

Porter: Jack Shelley was the state senator. The tradition on the Planning Commission was one woman, one labor man, and three other people. [Laughter] George Johns was an excellent commissioner. Woodruff and Sampson said they had never seen anybody who could read plans, who was a lay person, as rapidly as he.

Morris: Was Mr. Johns in the Building Trades Unions?

Porter: Yes, he was the secretary. Jack Shelley, whom I knew, one day after the meeting was talking to George and me and he said: George, Roger Lapham wants to put you on the Board of Education.

I just wailed because George Johns was outstanding, not as a labor man but just as an intelligent, able person. Jack Shelley looked at me and said: Who ever heard of the Planning Commission? Everybody knows about the Board of Education.

You know the Planning Commission is tremendously powerful now; everybody's heard about it; it's in every bit of controversy.

Morris: Did Mr. Johns go to the Board of Education?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: He agreed that that was a more important appointment at that time?

Porter: Yes, and that labor wanted him there, and that he was the labor man that Roger Lapham would appoint.

Morris: Who replaced Mr. Johns, then?

Porter: The original commission was Michel Weill, Gardiner Dailey, George Johns, Herman Weinberger (Cap Weinberger's father) and Julia Porter. Then Mr. Weinberger died and I think a young man whose name was Malcolm McNaughton replaced Mr. Weinberger.

Morris: But he didn't stay very long.

Porter: No, he went to Hawaii. Something terribly important in Hawaii. Then James J. Walsh, an engineer, must have replaced Malcolm McNaughton.

Morgan Gunst must have replaced George because the commission that went out was Michel Weill, Gardiner Dailey, Mr. Walsh, Morgan Gunst and Julia Porter.

Morris: So Roger Lapham, for that period of time, ignored the labor appointment.

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Did that cause him any difficulty?

Porter: I don't think so. Of course Roger Lapham was a tremendously important figure nationally as well as locally. He decided to be mayor out of love of San Francisco and to get a business approach to government.

Zoning and Redevelopment

- Porter: In those days, we did move along; we did the creative thing of rezoning.
- Morris: There was also, in an article in the Chronicle in 1948, mention of a redevelopment plan for the Western Addition.
- Porter: Yes. I think the Redevelopment Plan originated in our department, or some areas originated there. Then the redevelopment money, which was a tremendous amount, became available. A separate commission had to be set up.
- Morris: This is again federal money and federal regulations?
- Porter: Yes. With local people handling the thing, just as the Housing Authority was set up earlier when the public housing became an issue, and public housing was a bitter issue--
- Morris: How did you on the Planning Commission feel about redevelopment going off to be under a separate policy board?
- Porter: In those days, we didn't resent it in the least. You see, we were, as I told you, trying to get standards. Under the old Zoning Ordinance, you could build a single family house in certain districts; you could cover the whole lot if you wanted; you could build it with an atrium; and you could shut out your neighbors' light and air.
- Then, in R-2, you could build anything from two apartments or flats to two hundred, and there was no control between. Now the controls are, you have to have forty-five foot rear yards; there are three districts, in one of them you can only go thirty-five feet, and you have to have a detached house. In the other two, you can't go more than forty feet, and in the R-4 and R-5 you can go to a greater height.
- Morris: In your first term on the Planning Commission, how much time did your duties as a planning commissioner take?
- Porter: Not nearly the amount that one gives now. We had weekly meetings.
- Morris: Did your weekly meetings involve the staff?
- Porter: The director was involved. We see much more of the staff now. There are so many different things to cover, and it's now the procedure for the director to call on the staff member heading the team to make a presentation.
- Morris: When did Jack Kent become the planning director? That was in your

Morris: first term, wasn't it?

Porter: Yes, it was. It was '45 or '46. We had a young, an imaginative, and a very gifted staff. Many of the people who were there are now planning directors throughout the country. We did provide the leadership. Mr. Tilton was a gifted, imaginative person, but he was not an administrator, and we did have a tremendous difficulty between him and the staff. He therefore resigned under pressure.

Morris: That's a difficult spot for a commission to be in.

Porter: It was a very difficult spot.

Morris: After Mr. Tilton resigned, how did you go about selecting a new director of the Planning Department?

Porter: Jack was on the staff, and in that era, planners throughout the country knew each other. The field was so much more limited. There are now so many planners, so many directors; every little city has a planning department and a commission. In those days, only the larger cities had them, and Jack Kent was familiar with all the leaders throughout the nation. So we asked him to select these various people that we would interview.

We interviewed several with whom we were not impressed. Finally, the Commission, in executive session, said: We haven't seen anybody as bright as Jack Kent. Although he's only twenty-nine years of age, let's give him a chance.

We went to the mayor and said: How would you feel if we appointed him? The mayor said: Give him a try.

Jack Kent is a born organizer as well as a planner. He has a gift of working with people, and as far as I'm concerned, he's the perfect director.

Morris: What kinds of ideas or directions did he bring to planning that were different from the way things had gone earlier?

Porter: [Telephone rings, is ignored] I think the unusual thing-- we were talking about a new zoning ordinance, but the unusual thing was to give the Stonesons the right to develop Stonestown, in a single-family area, with ten-story apartments that would cover no more than ten percent of the land, that would have a garage space for each apartment, and that would be landscaped, where they put up a \$100,000 landscaping bond.

Also, I'm sure that in the new zoning ordinance, which took till 1962 to enact, many of the ideas were Jack's.

Developers and Other Constituencies

- Porter: Of course, there were hearings and hearings, and after every hearing the standards were cut down.
- Morris: Why would that be?
- Porter: The Board of Supervisors used to cut down; when things were appealed from the Planning Commission, we could bet nine times out of ten they'd overrule us. One of the things that I felt deeply about was that we tried (and this was when the zoning ordinance was still being debated in the Christopher era) to get R-1 (that's single family houses) on Twin Peaks. The Gellerts, who were the developers, went to the Supervisors and had that changed to R-3. All of the continuous conflict we have and difficulty on Twin Peaks development is due to that. If single family houses had been built, the narrow roads would have carried the cars much more easily than all the traffic from the apartments.
- Morris: Is your sense, then, that in your first term on the Planning Commission, the Supervisors perhaps used the Planning Commission as a buffer zone to get troubles aired out, and then that gave them some protection for making their decisions?
- Porter: You see, according to the Planning Code, you have two places to go. You can appeal to the Board of Supervisors or you can appeal certain things to the Board of Permit Appeals. The Lapham Board of Permit Appeals did not overrule the Planning Commission constantly. Now, when we hear something is going to the Board Of Permit Appeals, we usually sigh because most of the time they overrule us.
- The Board of Supervisors at the present time are apt to take this more extreme view of planning than we do. If twenty neighborhood people come in and shout that they want something, the Board of Supervisors will usually vote for them.
- Morris: In the '40s, what kinds of people came to the hearings that the Planning Commission held?
- Porter: They were usually, I think, representatives of the downtown interests who were opposing what we were trying to do, because we were trying to restrict business and development. Ultimately, we felt, the restricted development was much better for San Francisco.
- Now you never hear from the downtown people.
- Morris: What about builders and other people directly involved with some of

Morris: the construction going on in San Francisco in the '40s?

Porter: In the '40s, I'm sure they came in. The Gellerts--who else?

Morris: Did the Stonesons come to the hearings, or was this negotiated--?

Porter: No, the Stonesons came. The Stonesons were far ahead of their time. I remember meeting Ellis. This was in the '40s, and I was in Washington on some one of the board meetings. I went down in the elevator in the Statler Hotel with Ellis Stoneson, and he told me what he had seen in the Scandinavian countries. (In those days, everybody spoke of the wonderful housing in the Scandinavian countries, because of their balconies. Well, I had been to the Scandinavian countries, and the housing is very small; the rooms are small. Although at that time it was being held up as a model; at the present time, no public housing would be built with rooms as small as you have in the Scandinavian countries. They don't even have elevators until you get to the fifth floor; they walk up to the fifth floor.)

Everybody said: Housing is so wonderful in Copenhagen or Sweden, and none of the people saying how wonderful it was, had been there. But Ellis Stoneson went to see what they did, and there were good things. He said that he was on his way to Florida to see their shopping centers. He wanted the best project he could possibly get, and the conditions he submitted to were extraordinary at that time.

Morris: Who else besides Ellis Stoneson was involved in the development?

Porter: He had a brother, and now I think his son-in-law carries on.

Morris: Were they Bay Area people that had owned that land for some time?

Porter: I don't think they owned it. The land belonged to the Bornes of Spring Valley Water Company. I don't know whether San Francisco bought it, but the Bornes had tremendous restrictions on its development, which had to be removed or it never would have been developed. Like the Sutros giving all of Sutro Heights and that land to the city, with so many stipulations that the city was glad to have the will broken and the property to go to the heirs where they could develop it. There used to be terrific battles.

There was one on the development of Anza Vista, one group wanting it kept as a park, the other saying we needed housing. The same thing happened with Laurel Hill, the cemetery.

Morris: Could you give me a thumbnail sketch of what San Francisco was like right after World War II--the mid-forties, in terms of what downtown looked like and what you saw as the needs, and where population and

Morris: building was changing?

Porter: A real estate broker with Coldwell, Coldwell and Banker said to me that the amazing thing was that there had been practically no downtown building developed between 1924 and 1950.

[Tape turned over]

Morris: You were saying that in 1945 the Russ Building was about the only really big building downtown?

Porter: I think 111 Sutter was there. Then the Equitable building was built. I would say prior to 1945, mostly local capital went into development--the Crockers, the Spreckels, various other old wealthy families who have gone with the wind. They have many heirs who do not live here, and there isn't the commitment to the city that there used to be.

Then the Zellerbach building was built; it was one of the outstanding things. That was finished in the Christopher regime, and we were all so thrilled that there was this local development. It was done in accordance with modern building, in which you didn't cover all the land; you had setbacks. Within a year, it became the property of some insurance company.

Then the Crockers built the Crocker Plaza building. Now it is partially owned by an insurance company.

Morris: So that you think when it's a national firm, either builder or financing organization--?

Porter: Well, I think the day of the individual in the community who had so great an influence on its development is gone. We have the hotels. The St. Francis Hotel I think was built by the Crocker group and largely owned by it. Now we have the Westbury, the Hyatt, the Hyatt Regency, the Holiday Inn--all of these hotels that are part of national chains.

Morris: How about in 1945? Was the industrial part of San Francisco a larger and more active part of the community?

Porter: It was. San Francisco had been losing industry I think since the early '50s. Part of this was due to the fact that industry had new standards. They wanted one-story buildings, they wanted large parking areas, all of which San Francisco hasn't enough land area for.

Morris: How about the residential areas? You said that there hadn't been much in the way of downtown commercial building for twenty-five years. Was

Morris: the same also true of the residential areas of the city?

Porter: No. I'm sure that in that area, the Gellerts developed their rows of houses in the Sunset.

IX VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC PLANNING

San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association [SPUR]

- Morris: Now, could you tell me what your reaction was when Elmer Robinson became mayor? That seems to have produced quite a flap about not only the Planning Commission but all the boards and commissions.
- Porter: The charter of the city of San Francisco says commissioners shall have these staggered terms, but they shall serve at the pleasure of the mayor. That is as clear as it could be. My feeling was (I think I've stated) it would have been nice to have learned other than through the newspaper, but that the mayor had a right to his own commissioners. I feel they're his cabinet; he should have people in whom he had confidence and people who have confidence in him.
- Morris: Why hadn't you supported him for mayor?
- Porter: Because Franck Havenner ran. He was a friend of mine and I thought he'd be very good. He was a good congressman.
- I have supported Republicans. Havenner happened to be a Democrat with whom I had worked very closely.
- Morris: Do you feel that that had some bearing on Mayor Robinson's decision to replace you on the Planning Commission?
- Porter: There was nothing personal in that. [Laughter] He removed everybody. I think he just wanted his own commission, which was right. George Christopher did the same thing, at least insofar as the Planning Commission is concerned, and young Roger Lapham was named chairman of the Commission.
- Morris: The newspapers reported that George Christopher had some trouble with the city Public Utilities Commission. Did they refrain from resigning, or was there some issue going with public utilities?

Porter: No, they had to resign. But as of today, many commissioners say to me: I have a term that goes for three years. I'm not resigning.

I am sure they eventually will resign, if the mayor wants them to. Unfortunately, in this election [1975], commissioners have been made an issue, which I think is very bad. They're not the overall issue. We all know that every mayor has people he knows and should have the people who believe in him and in whom he believes.

Morris: During the years that Robinson was mayor and you were off the Planning Commission, did you stay involved in activities from which you could keep an eye on the Planning Commission?

Porter: Yes. I was very active in the Planning and Housing Association. But we were very careful about making any criticism of the Commission, other than the one instance, and I'm sorry I don't quite remember what the special thing was. Selah Chamberlain was president and he made a newspaper statement. Mayor Robinson was quite upset about the thing.

Morris: When did the Planning and Housing Association become SPUR--the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association?

Porter: [Pause] It must have been fifteen years ago or so.

Morris: In the late '50s?

Porter: Yes. A young man from Stockton, who was the redevelopment director, came and headed it up. Then people who had a great deal of money, like Jerd Sullivan, became more active on the board--we were an organization that had operated on ten thousand a year, and I think they became in the hundred thousand category.

Morris: When it became interested in redevelopment and renewal?

Porter: When it got people of status in the downtown sector, and when these people also contributed to it.

Crocker Home and the Ladies Protection and Relief Society

Morris: It was in these early '50s that you were still on the board of the Crocker Home and you spent a couple of years working out a merger with another organization. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Porter: The Crocker Home had been built in 1889. I think Page Brown was the architect. If it were still intact, it would be a landmark. Every

Porter: year the fire department used to come and say we had to remove two stories. I remember saying: Would you like us to put our residents out on the street?

I had a friend who was president of the Ladies Protection and Relief Society, which operated out of 3400 Laguna Street in a lovely Tudor building designed by Julia Morgan. They had eighteen old ladies whom they would care for for life. Then they had an infirmary for I don't know whether it was fifteen or eighteen people who were permitted to come and stay a month at a dollar a day when they were convalescing.

This friend told me the Ladies Protection and Relief owned the square block where the Jack Tar now is; they owned a great deal of other things.

The Crocker Home had a life care agreement in which people--to begin with, we had somebody's coachman who'd come in thirty years before at twenty-five hundred dollars. When we merged, we were not taking any more life care members. The last group had come in at fifteen thousand. This friend, Mrs. Donald Craig, said: Wouldn't it be nice if we could merge? You do so much good work and we have so much money.

The men discussed this, the board of trustees. The men were very forward-looking, and they wanted the merger. Then it came time for the two women's boards--on our side of the fence some of the people resigned because they didn't want a merger with the Ladies Protection and Relief. I wanted to merge because we were building seventy-eight new rooms and baths, which meant that the work would continue. If we stayed at Pine and Pierce, there didn't seem to be the energy or initiative to rebuild or to borrow money to build; we would have gradually closed down. The Ladies Protection and Relief would have continued to do its very nice but limited service. So that is the way we managed to merge.

Morris: Why did people on the Crocker board not want to merge?

Porter: People want to do their own little projects. Two of our very valuable men resigned--the man who'd been the lawyer (not charging us) for years, and our accountant (who charged us practically nothing). They both resigned.

Inevitably you get two groups of personalities. We had the philosophy that everybody had their own doorkey, and people came and went as they wanted. The only thing they had to do was let us know if they were going to be away. At the Ladies Protection and Relief, they had to ring the doorbell. [Laughter]

Morris: Then how did you finally bring about the merger?

Porter: The men really agreed on it. And then Dave White of Coldwell, Banker put together the lease so the Jack Tar Hotel could build on our land and our income was assured. He said it was the smartest lease in town.

Then there was the agreement that we'd have the new building. I was put on the building committee, and I remember making the battle to get a bath with every room. Some of the men on the Ladies Protection and Relief board thought that a bath between two rooms would be enough. I remember saying: The minute the building is completed it will be outmoded. People have to have privacy.

Morris: The successor organization serves both men and women, right?

Porter: Yes. The Ladies Protection and Relief had nothing but ladies, and some of the members were so delighted that we had some men at the Crocker Home. I noticed more men seemed to be coming into the LP&R. If you get twelve men and eighty women [laughter], you do well.

Morris: Is the new organization called the Heritage, or is that just the name of the building?

Porter: It's the name of the building. Legally, it's still the Ladies Protection and Relief.

Morris: What a marvelous name!

Porter: Yes. Isn't that something! That was given it in 1848. It was given it with the sandlot on Van Ness and Geary and Post and Franklin.

Morris: And they held it all those years.

Porter: I understand Mr. Hawes, the donor, was the person who did this, and my understanding is there was some clause that prevented it from being sold for a certain number of years. Then evidently there were very wise men who didn't sell it.

Morris: It wasn't still vacant land when the Jack Tar Hotel was looking for a building site?

Porter: No, they built automobile salesrooms, from which the Heritage (or the LP&R) got a very good income.

Morris: When you went about remodeling and expanding the Heritage building, did you by any chance have to go through the Planning Commission?

Porter: We had to go to them when we build the infirmary. I had to disqualify

Porter: myself. But I did have a very deep conviction that if they wanted an infirmary, it should be limited. The infirmary was built so it could only be one story, and that was taken care of in constructing the foundation. Now, every board member would give their eyes to be able to put another story on top of the infirmary. But I have a feeling about a public building, and this is public, in a residential neighborhood--that you don't crowd the neighborhood too much. The neighborhood can stand the infirmary, they can stand our traffic and parking; some of the members still drive their cars. But the thing that happens is the help drive theirs.

Morris: And the service people come in with their equipment. What was it like to appear before the Planning Commission, having served as a member of it yourself?

Porter: Oh, I couldn't. I had to disqualify myself. Wasn't that '56? Wasn't I back on the Commission then?

Morris: I think it was just before. I think the press clippings I have are 1955 for the merger, so the infirmary was probably after that; then you were back on the Planning Commission.



Colleagues in planning for San Francisco: Jack Chow, Mrs. Porter, Tom Hsieh. Ca. 1964. Kem Lee Photo.



Toast to successful cooperative planning: Mrs. Porter and banker Emmett Solomon at Crocker Plaza.

X BROAD ISSUES BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION, 1956-1975

Mayor George Christopher

Morris: Did you happen to work for George Christopher when he ran for mayor?

Porter: Yes, I did.

Morris: Was this because there was any difficulty about the way Mr. Robinson and his Planning Commission operated?

Porter: No. I'd known George Christopher as a Supervisor; I'd admired him. He was a very straightforward, honest person with definite convictions and a great deal of strength. I was asked by his campaign manager if I'd support him. I did, and I was co-chairman with a Republican lady [laughter] because the local election is nonpartisan.

Morris: Who was the Republican lady? That wasn't Mrs. Prince?

Porter: Oh no. It was Jane Zimmerman. Mildred Prince did things as I did them--civic things, charity, and politics. Some people just did politics.

Morris: Jane Zimmerman was one of those?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: Was she a professional woman as well? The clipping in your scrapbook says that she was active in the Business and Professional Women.

Porter: She probably was.

Morris: Did she continue to be active in public life?

Porter: I think the Mayor put her on the Park and Recreation Commission, along with Gladys Moore.

- Morris: Did Mr. Christopher talk with you about appointing you to a board or commission?
- Porter: No, never. I have been appointed by four mayors. No mayor ever made a commitment to me; I never asked for a commitment. I don't think any mayor with any judgment promises a specific post to a supporter.
- Morris: I was thinking about after an election, when a new mayor is getting his government together. Does he ever talk to someone and say: I'd like to appoint you. What's your preference? Has anybody ever done that? (Although in your case they'd probably know you wanted to be on the Planning Commission, I would assume.)
- Porter: Don Nicholson, who was the campaign manager for George Christopher, said: What are you interested in?, and I said: Planning.
- Morris: So you weren't really surprised when the mayor appointed you.
- Porter: No.

Observations on Planning Directors

- Morris: When you went back on the Planning Commission, what kinds of changes were you aware of, after an eight-year leave of absence?
- Porter: The scope of the Commission had increased.
- Morris: In what way?
- Porter: [Pause] I think Jack Kent, in the Lapham regime, had suggested that the mayor have a committee of Planning and Transportation. When we first went in, the Department of Public Works went its own way, the Municipal Railway went its own way, the planners went their own way (they did the planning)--there was a general chaos. We used to work with the state, and I remember Mr. Tilton, the director, being livid because the Chief Administrative Officer was the person who negotiated with the state for freeways (which were considered innocuous in those days) or where state roads went through.
- Morris: And the CAO was the only person that the State Highway Division consulted with?
- Porter: In those days. So the CAO, who was Mr. Thomas Brooks, a very fine man, said he would agree that no recommendations be made without Mr. Tilton. Then Mr. Tilton went off on his own which was resented by the CAO.

- Porter: But Jack Kent made the suggestion that the mayor have this group called the Transportation-Planning Council consisting of the Department of Public Works, Public Utilities, CAO, and Planning Department.
- Morris: An interagency staff committee?
- Porter: Yes, where they would all work together. I think that was being done when I came back in '56. There was a larger staff, there was more planning to be done.
- Morris: Jack Kent wasn't still there, was he?
- Porter: No. Jack Kent left a much more highly paid city job as Director of Planning to go to the University of California and establish the Department of City Planning there.
- Morris: Do you know what the reason for this was?
- Porter: Jack loved planning. He felt there was a need for a school at the University; he wanted to head it; he wanted to prepare other planners. I understood that the job he did was tremendous.
- Morris: Did he help find his successor for the San Francisco Planning Department?
- Porter: The Commission said that the mayor must choose the successor; they wouldn't take the responsibility. So it was Mayor Robinson who chose Paul Opperman, who had an excellent national reputation.
- Morris: He was not from the Bay Area.
- Porter: He was from Washington or some eastern place. Whenever there's difficulty, they select the director from a far-off place.
- It's very funny; you probably know it from the University, too. If you get somebody from Philadelphia that no one here knows, you're very happy. If you're having problems, nobody here is satisfactory to everybody.
- Morris: Was there some kind of controversy about city planning in San Francisco?
- Porter: No, but since the mayor was making the selection, you know the far-off hills are the greenest; somebody from Philadelphia or Washington is infinitely more acceptable than someone from San Francisco.
- Morris: Is your suspicion, then, that the Planning Commission felt this was a hot potato?
- Porter: Yes. I can't imagine any Commission on which I've served not wishing

Porter: to get in and express itself and make the decision.

You see, we had a decision to make late last year, when we chose Dean Macris.* And when we chose Allan Jacobs, there was a great deal of controversy about the director.

Morris: That was Mr. McCarthy again, wasn't it?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: He'd come back, or had he been in the department all the time?

Porter: He'd grown up in the department, and he is a gifted planner. But the pressures became so great that he was ill and he resigned.

Morris: Oh dear! Is that what planning does to people?

Porter: It doesn't do it to some very tough people. I'm sure Jack would never allow it. I think he would spring at them before they sprang at him. Or Allan Jacobs, who resigned to teach at the University.

Other Planners: Port Authority, Redevelopment Agency, Landmarks Preservation Commission

Morris: By '56, when you came back, I find in the newspapers discussions of the Embarcadero City. Is that what's now called Embarcadero Center?

Porter: No, not at all. Cyril Magnin, who has a brilliant oriental imaginative mind, envisioned making filled land off the waterfront and building a city there. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission, I think, won't let them even add a foot of sand to the existing land now. That was something! The Planning Commission would read in the paper about Embarcadero City. [Laughter] To say it was livid is an understatement.

Morris: In other words, Mr. Magnin was not on the Planning Commission when he--?

Porter: No, he was on the Port Authority and he was going to do this for the

*And another director was being selected in 1976. Ed.

Porter: Port.

Morris: Communication wasn't all that good between the Planning Commission and other bodies?

Porter: I think that Cyril didn't have time to waste with a lot of planners arguing this and that and the other thing, and he just brought forth these ideas, and everybody thought they were wonderful at that time. You notice from the newspaper it was lauded, wasn't it, other than that the Planning Commission was being very critical?

Morris: There were a number of rather sweeping ideas, not only this Embarcadero City but various other large-scale projects being mentioned. Then there was the comment that there were thorns in the redevelopment process. I wondered how the Redevelopment Agency was doing in the late '50s.

Porter: When Justin Herman took over the Redevelopment Agency [1959] it moved with great rapidity. He was imaginative, he was a doer, he was a terrific administrator. Everybody said that the fire at the Cathedral saved area A-2, because then the church built their new cathedral.

Morris: In the Western Addition, where there was already land scheduled for clearance?

Porter: Demolition. It was all demolished. Now, if it hadn't been done--there were beautiful Victorian houses there that had really become slums. They were boarding houses, they were unkempt, unpainted, but they had been handsome houses. Whether, if the land hadn't been razed, now they could be rehabilitated--and you know there is a Washington program in which money for the building of new houses, can be used for the rehabilitation of old ones.

Morris: Not too much later--I think it was in the early '60s, there's a mention of looking for an area where there were something like six hundred houses suitable for rehabilitation that came before the Planning Commission. I wondered when the idea began to emerge of rehabilitating older buildings rather than clearing the land and redeveloping. Do you remember when that idea first began to come to the Planning Commission, or if it came from staff rather than citizens?

Porter: I do know that the Landmarks board worked with the Redevelopment Agency to save some of the Victorian houses. These community development funds, which are something relatively new, and which the city can designate how the money is to be spent, give an opportunity to set aside so much money for rehabilitation. I know that Dean Macris is very much interested in that. The first money spent is being earmarked to take care of former commitments.

Morris: For rehabilitation?

Porter: No, for other things--finishing up housing projects, doing various community things.

Morris: Shortly after you went back on the Commission, you got quite a lot of space in the newspapers for discovering that there were federal lands which were about to become available that weren't zoned. Could you tell me that story? That sounds quite interesting.

Porter: The developers wished to build housing at Fort Funston, the Planning Commission wished to keep it open. I think the federal government--GSA [General Services Administration]--must have been willing to sell it. So the Planning staff made a study. The thing we always hear is if you get more property on the tax roll, you reduce your taxes. Well, we had the staff make a complete analysis of what it would cost the city if the project was developed purely residential, with police, fire protection, sewage, and all, in which we were able to paint a very dark picture.

I remember we made a field trip out there, and I was wearing high-heeled shoes. We got out to walk over the sands and I couldn't walk so I just took my shoes off. [Laughter] But we did go there, and then we came back and persuaded the mayor, who was very practical (that's George Christopher; he could be quite a hard-headed businessman), that it was not to the interest of the city to have Fort Funston developed as housing but it is in our interest as permanent open space. We haven't been able to develop it and make a park, but it is open space.

My theory is, if you don't build on it, the day will come when you can make it a park. As long as you keep it open space, it's to the advantage of the city and the neighborhood. I mean, open space is needed. Golden Gate Park is bursting at the seams.

Morris: As far as recreational use.

Porter: Yes. Have you ever driven there on a Sunday? People picnicking--it seems every bit of green is used.

Morris: The International Airport got a lot of newspaper interest in your first term on the Planning Commission. How much involved was the Planning Commission?

Porter: We were involved on paper. As I remember, didn't we talk about landings on roofs?

Morris: A heliport downtown, yes.

- Porter: Yes, and places for private planes? We never envisioned the kind of airport we have now. But I think the 747s are big buses, and who ever envisioned that!
- Morris: Didn't the airport develop under the Public Utilities Commission?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: And then spin off as a separate agency with its own advisory policy board. How did it happen that the Planning Commission didn't have more of a say?
- Porter: I think there are certain things that are referred to us from the airport, but the work down there is so tremendous--the handling of the air lines, the building of repair shops--it's really too big. And that is an active thing; it's a very real business thing.
- Morris: Of day-to-day operations that's more detailed, you think, than a planning commission should oversee?
- Porter: It covers what the people pay; I don't know what they pay the city, but they do pay something. Rates must be set, what lines are permitted to come in.
- Morris: The Redevelopment Agency would also relate to business in the sense of the companies that did the actual land clearing, construction, and supplying materials; to say nothing of all the jobs. What is the relationship between the Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Agency?
- Porter: It was an armed truce. Planning felt they should be doing the planning for Redevelopment, and Justin Herman had his own planning staff and they did their own planning. Occasionally we would question some of their plans. Justin was a very simple-minded person. We had a real battle over that terrible bridge over Kearney Street from the Chinese Center, which was the work of the Redevelopment Agency. They always ended up by saying that it was a fait accompli, that we had approved this in principle (which we had). I think there still is the feeling that there shouldn't be three planning agencies; there should be one planning agency.
- Morris: What's the third planning agency?
- Porter: At the present time, with the federal funds, there are independent planners who work out of the mayor's office. It's quite a large staff, and I feel that this should be under the Planning Commission. It would take legislation to do it, and nobody on the Board of Supervisors seems to be willing to bring the matter up.
- Morris: Are the Supervisors concerned that the mayor's office should have

Morris: its own planning staff?

Porter: They don't seem to be concerned that Redevelopment has.

[Tape 8 begins]

Porter: Frequently the Redevelopment Agency could pay higher salaries than we were permitted because they didn't have to go to civil service; they were working with their funds from the federal government.

Morris: That complicates things, doesn't it, when the city is then revising its salary scales?

Porter: Yes. The only thing is that our people seem to have a tenure that theirs lack because they have certain projects on which they need a large number of people, and then when the project's completed, they have to cut back staff.

The Middle Class and Community Development

Morris: At what point did you begin to get a feeling that there were limits to how much redevelopment the citizens of San Francisco were willing to--

Porter: I think I had always questioned redevelopment, and that's because I was one of the early supporters, and we were told at that time that redevelopment was to replace slum housing with good housing. Instead, redevelopment became expensive, highrise apartments, it became commercial activities, even industrial activities (as Butchertown has proposed). I think the original conception of redevelopment was very different.

Morris: How do you account for the shift in what actually happened?

Porter: There was federal money, and bright and energetic young leaders--heads of these agencies--went in and made their plans. They had to have somebody agree to do the development or take it, and when the plans weren't acceptable to the developer, they changed them.

Morris: And the federal guidelines permitted this shift from housing to commercial?

Porter: They must have.

Morris: At what point did things begin to shift? I begin to find comments in the paper in the mid-60s about the neighborhood saying: There's been enough of this, and not wanting federal funds if it means federal regulations. Did you find an increase in private individuals or citizens organizations coming to the Planning Commission?

Porter: When the areas A1 and A2 were cleared, people weren't organized to protest, as they are now, at being thrown out of their homes; no matter how modest or uncomfortable, they were their homes.

Redevelopment was not as responsible on relocation as it should have been, and one of the reasons was it didn't have the housing to put the people in; they were demolishing before they had new housing built. I think when these people found they had no place to go, there was an objection.

Also neighborhood people object bitterly to public housing. Now public housing is doing smaller units to which the neighborhood doesn't object.

Morris: There also is mention of a Community Renewal Plan that was done under the Planning Department.

Porter: Was that A. D. Little?

Morris: Yes. I wondered if the Planning Commission wanted to give some counter-

Porter: That was done with federal funds. There was \$500,000 from the federal government, and then we put in whatever amount was needed.

Morris: The story in the paper says it was a two-thirds federal grant.

Porter: It would be \$250,000. We got \$500,000. But things change in planning; there really are fads. The Community Development Program was something you had to have if you really were on top of planning.

I remember going to the Board of Supervisors. We didn't take any tax money; our input was in kind, in local services. The Planning Department did so much. But I remember having to go to the Supervisors time after time before they would say that they would permit this, because they had to okay the local money, and they did. We got our Community Renewal Program, which was one of the first in the country. If you're the first, your successors always improve on what you have done. As the years have changed, some of the recommendations have changed. Some people are critical of it and some are not, but at least we have a community renewal program.

Morris: Was your intent that this should give you some information that would challenge some of the things that the Redevelopment Agency was doing?

Porter: On all of these things, if you don't have a master plan, you can't get money. If you don't, you don't have a community renewal program. At least we thought that it would be there as a weapon when the federal government said: What do you have?

Morris: This would have been started, yes, while you were president of the Planning Commission.

Porter: Yes. The community resists being the first one. A. D. Little had to work out what would go into a community renewal program.

Morris: Was this the first time that the Planning Commission had retained Little to do a study?

Porter: Yes.

Morris: How do you think they did?

Porter: I think they did a very good job. I think they're an excellent firm. But, you know, studies today that are excellent may not even be looked at tomorrow or be considered necessary.

In this case, the Commission did the selecting. There has been a change in which the director brings in one person who he recommends as a consultant; we assume he's gone over the field. We had three outstanding candidates. We had Stanford Research, we had A. D. Little, and someone else whose name I've forgotten. We interviewed them and finally decided that Little would do the best job for us.

Morris: This was the first mention that I came across in the press of the problem of the disappearing middle class. The Little report, as it was reported in the paper, said that the city should seek to encourage more middle class families.

Porter: We heard that at every Planning meeting. People came in and said, if we do a certain thing we're driving the middle class out. The problem of the middle class is, we do have fewer people, but people can go to Daly City and buy a home for thirty thousand dollars that would cost fifty thousand here.

We have a school problem here; so many people don't wish to send their children to public schools. The public schools in Marin or San Mateo they find adequate. The amazing thing is the people who commute in and out of the city for jobs, people who live in the city commute out of it for their jobs and people who work here commute out of it to their homes, as you've been reading.

Morris: So that you think that it's not really something that any one city government can do anything about.

- Porter: No. It's a pattern that's prevalent throughout the United States. People with children, families, are moving to the suburbs. I don't know whether minority problems (minorities don't move) had anything to do with this, or whether it's an economic thing, or whether it's pleasanter to live on an acre and a half with a large garden for which you're responsible than to live in a row house with a small garden.
- Morris: You're saying that there have been basic changes in people's patterns of living.
- Porter: Yes. On this block, all of the children--it's a nice neighborhood, and they used to go to Alamo School. There is not a child on this block that goes to public school now. They go to private school because their parents feel they are not getting a good education in public school, and they object to the busing without a purpose. I'm sure if they were getting the highest standard of education the busing would not become a factor.
- Morris: Do some of these points that you've just talked about have a bearing on the Planning Commission beginning to talk about regional studies, or was Jack Kent already interested in regional aspects of planning?
- Porter: Jack was always ahead [laughter] two miles of everybody else.
- Morris: Do you think it was Jack Kent bringing it to the Commission's attention. There were some regional studies--
- Porter: Even in Jack's day.
- Morris: After he was planning director he came back as the mayor's director of development.
- Porter: Oh yes. He came back for that. Do you know Fran Violich at the University? He was head of the department but he also worked on our staff.
- Morris: Yes. Did he and others of your staff in the Planning Department move back and forth from various universities into the city department?
- Porter: No, they didn't. Jack was the only person who came back, as deputy for development.
- Morris: Is that where the city mayor's planning staff was located--in the development office?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: Does that also relate to federal money.
- Porter: I don't know; I think it's city money. I think the mayor set it up

Porter: at the insistence of SPUR--it seems to me that that came from there. Jack Tolan at the present time is the deputy for development.

Usually the director of planning is not enamored of the director of development because the director of development wants to tell the director of planning some things to do for him, and the director of planning feels he's so over-worked and over-crowded, and he knows his own priorities--

Morris: There's a difference of emphasis too, isn't there? Doesn't development involve finding the money to do what the planning--?

[Interruption]

Planning Commission Presidency

Morris: We were talking about you as vice president of the Planning Commission.

Porter: Because I had refused to be president. Well, when Mark Sullivan was put on the Commission, certain very important people decided--who were not commissioners--that they were going to determine who was the president, and they wanted Mark Sullivan for president. Two of our commissioners--very important men--were I think bowing to pressure; they felt that they were capable of being president, which they were.

I remember going to lunch, and I said: You gentlemen decide who you want--Mark Sullivan or either one of you. I don't want it.

I refused to call a meeting on the presidency because two commissioners were absent. So Joe Tinney, who'd been president of the Commission, phoned me and said he'd had a telephone call: why didn't I call this meeting? So he very stuffily said: She's quite capable of being president. She doesn't want it, which I didn't.

Finally on this day, these two men who were in line for it and could have done it, said that they wanted Mark Sullivan. I also had instructions from one of them that I was to announce it immediately and hand over the gavel. I remember saying: Mr. Sullivan, we'd like very much to have you president of the Commission.

He said: You're in line for it, Mrs. Porter, and quite capable. I think you should have it.

I said: No. We really want you. I think you'll be more effective. So he was made president.

Morris: Had there been personal contacts with you saying: We think Sullivan ought to be president of the Commission?

Porter: No; there had been with the other two men, who told me. I said: Whatever you gentlemen want, because I frankly felt I was more effective not being president. Being president seems to mean more to a man than it does to a woman, or at least to me. I sat there to be as effective for planning as I could.

When Jack Shelley became mayor, he just flatly stated he wanted me as president [1964]. Jim Kearney, the labor man, was vice president. And I was a successful president. But men have more hostages to fortune than women, or than this woman. So at the end of my first term, I called Jim Kearney and said: Jim, do you want to be president?

He said: I certainly do. I said: Fine. I'll step down. I'll hand the job over to you and I'll nominate you.

Bill Brinton didn't like it at all. He said: You're a good president; you should stay there. But I didn't, and that's the tale of my presidency.

Morris: I'm fascinated. It sounds as if there's a lot of maneuvering about who's going to be president, and that sometimes the mayor takes a stand and sometimes the Commission decides for itself--is that true?

Porter: Lapham didn't take any stand. George Christopher said he would like either Roger Lapham, Jr. or Bob Lillienthal. We had Roger Lapham, Jr. and Roger was there for four years--a superb president.

Morris: Even though he hadn't had much experience in civic matters before.

Porter: He was dedicated, he was fair, and he was superb. Did you ever read Helen Lapham's book Roving with Roger?

Morris: No.

Porter: It's very interesting. She ends by quoting me as saying: Roger was one of the best presidents we ever had.

After the first year, the vice president was changed, and then it was the same president and vice president for the next three years.

Now who, on Christopher's second term, became president? SPUR had quite a bit of influence in naming the commissioners; I don't think they'd have it now.

Morris: Let's see. Roger Lapham, Jr., and Lillienthal and you and Ted White

Morris: and Don Kirby were Christopher's appointees.

Porter: Yes, they're the first. And then Don Kirby resigned because you can't do city work and be in the Planning Commission, [laughter] and city work is more profitable. But Roger didn't go back on the commission the second term, and neither did Bob Lilienthal. Bob Lilienthal-- didn't he resign in the first term?

Morris: That's right. I wondered why he didn't continue.

Porter: He entered into the private development business.

Morris: I know who was the next president--Joseph Tinney.

Porter: Yes, and an excellent president.

Morris: Now, did he go on to run for elective office himself?

Porter: No. George Christopher appointed him. He had two vacancies on the Board of Supervisors, and he appointed Joe Tinney and Peter Tamaris for these vacancies. Then--if you wish the Tinney picture--Tinney ran and was reelected, and then Jack Shelley named him assessor.

Morris: I was aware that he'd gone on into other local jobs in government, but I wasn't sure which they were.

You said you felt that when all the men had had their turn and Jack Shelley insisted that you be president, that you had a successful term. Why did you feel it was successful? Had you some special things you wanted to do?

Porter: We got the CRP underway. We worked harmoniously. The staff produced the things that needed producing. If I hadn't worked with the Commission harmoniously, enough to have Bill Brinton say they thought I should stay and not step down for Jim Kearney--

I felt I was just as effective and even more so than being president.

Morris: Than the men had been when they were president?

Porter: No, no. Mark Sullivan resigned, you know; he resigned very shortly. So he couldn't have been very active as president. But Joe Tinney was good. I think, to get along with your fellow-commissioners, to work with the staff, and to work with the director are the important things.

Housing Density, Height Limits, and Citizen Participation

- Morris: In the letter that you wrote to accompany the annual report the year that you were president, you commented on a couple of other things. One is the modifications in the R-3 zoning standards.
- Porter: The formula used to be one unit for every four hundred square feet. If you had a thirty-two hundred square foot lot, you could put eight units on it. When we moved it up to eight hundred, it meant you could only put four units, and therefore it meant a great difference in the density.
- Morris: Is this something that you'd been getting requests for from neighborhoods?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: You also had a project that year on northeastern San Francisco height limits. That's the waterfront and Telegraph Hill areas, isn't it?
- Porter: I will take some credit for the 40-foot height limit because we had studied this for a year or a year and a half. The Fontana Apartments came under R-4, which said you could cover the land four times, or if you covered the land half, you'd have an eight-story building. Nobody ever dreamed of covering the land twenty-five percent and doing a sixteen story building that cut off the views, but it was legal.

I remember Marian Hinman came to me and said: We are going to employ John Carl Warnecke (this was the Russian Hill group) to do a plan of the waterfront. And I said: You're wasting your money. This is a plan covering private property; you cannot tell people how to build. Ask for a forty-foot height limit. Work with the staff and find out what will happen.

The staff worked on it and finally came in with the recommendation that there be a year and a half hold until a complete plan could be gone into, just to find out whether forty feet was right or whether there should be other formulas.

We had this meeting (and this is where you can be more effective not being chairman; you can be effective being chairman sometimes, but frequently you can do more as an independent commissioner). Jim McCarthy brought in his recommendation that we have the forty-foot height limit on an interim basis--a year and a half, which would mean nothing could be built for a year and a half in excess of 40 feet, so that the staff would go into a complete examination of what the effect on properties and views would be.

Porter: Mark Sullivan said: Well, we won't discuss that now; we'll put that aside and discuss it later. I said: I'm very sorry to disagree with the chairman of the Planning Commission, but I move the director's report.

There was pregnant silence. I'd had it, I thought: If the people don't want it, if my fellow-commissioners are so opposed to it--I waited to hear the voice of a second. I said: I'm not sure that this is right; it may be wrong. But it does give us temporary protection and it will not hurt anyone to wait that year and a half.

Finally the voice of Bob Kirkwood, who was an ex-officio member as Public Utilities manager, spoke up and said: I agree with Mrs. Porter. I'm not sure this is right, but I do think we should put on the interim control while this study is being made. I'm going to second her motion.

So then, Gardner Mein and Louis Cole and Bob Kirkwood and I-- who was the labor man then?

Morris: Phil Dindia?

Porter: I imagine so. But Sherman Duckel, the CAO, Phil Dindia, and Mr. Sullivan voted against it. This was a great triumph.

But the thing that we had was, the very talented lawyer Joe Martin, representing the Ghirardellis, who were fighting this--

Morris: This is about the time that Ghirardelli Square was being developed?

Porter: No, not then. This thing had become almost a public thing. Joe Martin was a very brilliant and effective lawyer being paid by the Ghirardellis. The next step was the Board of Supervisors, and that board was effected by a brilliant [laughter] lawyer. At least the Planning Commission had done what it could.

The next thing that happened was Bill Roth bought the Ghirardelli property and stated that he wanted a forty-foot height limit.

Morris: That he wanted a limit?!

Porter: Yes. I will give him all the credit and all the stars in heaven for that action. I remember calling him up and saying how wonderful he was and he said: A couple more of these will break me. [Laughter]

Morris: You mean buying a couple more pieces of property.

Porter: Yes, he bought the whole Ghirardelli property. The Ghirardellis were out of the picture; Joe Martin was out of the picture. Russian Hill

- Porter: was solidly for the height limit, and when the new Ghirardelli owner-- the big interest--said he wanted it, other interests didn't have a chance with the Board of Supervisors.
- Morris: Mr. Roth had been active in SPUR off and on, hadn't he, over the years?
- Porter: Yes. I think he became more active after this.
- Morris: I see. In other words, he bought Ghirardelli Square on an impulse?
- Porter: I guess he was in SPUR. You know Bill Wurster developed it. I'm sure Bill Roth must have known something about the possibility of what could be done, but nevertheless I think he bought it through a conviction and a feeling for San Francisco.
- Morris: Had the Ghirardellis wanted to take down the buildings and put in a new big--?
- Porter: Yes. The Ghirardellis didn't care in the least about San Francisco; they wanted to develop the land to its highest value. We would have had some more contact with them before the Planning Commission.
- Morris: That's quite a story.
- Porter: The irony is: Ghirardelli Square stands as a monument to the Ghirardellis, but it wouldn't be there if Bill Roth hadn't bought it and asked for the forty-foot height limit. Those Supervisors were very cooperative when he came in.
- Morris: Because of his personal authority or because they wanted the forty-foot limit themselves?
- Porter: No. Look, the height limits that have become an accepted thing now were an extraordinary thing at that time. This was doing an unusual thing; people like the Ghirardellis felt their land was zoned in a certain way and they had the right to develop it.
- Morris: Do you think that the members of the Planning Commission were already beginning to feel that heights and the amount of building on any given piece of land was already getting out of hand before you began to have these neighborhood--?
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: Could you take a stand as a Planning Commission without the community coming in?
- Porter: Oh yes. We did. The Lapham Planning Commission rezoned the Sunset [District], which was R-2, which meant two flats, not two hundred

Porter: apartments. It had been developed by the Gellerts with Sunstream Homes. The single-family homes there were rows and blocks and blocks.

We, with the help of a very small group of people, rezoned that from R-2, to R-1, and you should have heard the builders oppose that. There were many more builders then because there was much more land. We have so little developable land now.

Morris: Do you think that over the years there's been an increase in the number of citizens and citizen organizations that are taking a look at what's going on in their own neighborhoods?

Porter: I think there always were neighborhood organizations. Most of them used to be to have a view of being part of the city. The neighborhood organizations now tend to react that this is good for us, this is what we want, what happens some other place is no concern of ours.

I have said the most civilized neighborhood group I've ever known is the Jordan Park Association, which is caught between Geary Boulevard and the Childrens and Hahneman Hospitals. Now, there are many very handsome single-family homes and there are a few apartments and flats there. But the district has kept its quality and character.

The Jordan Park people will come to us and say: We know of our unfortunate geographical location. We know these institutions have their problems. We will recognize them to this extent.

When Childrens Hospital wanted to build an office building, Fantasia was there and Fantasia is an industrial use. Fantasia said they'd sell them the land, I think, if they could stay. I said to Childrens Hospital: I'll never vote for you if you can't work this out with Jordan Park.

Jordan Park said: We realize you need the office building. We will not have an industrial use. But Jordan Park went along and approved that office building where all the doctors have moved into. They felt the hospital needed it. They approved additions to Hahneman Hospital if they were done in a certain way, in which Hahneman would set its building back twenty-five feet from Sacramento. And they did, so it didn't throw the shadow on the houses on the other side of Sacramento.

We didn't realize what was happening when Childrens built their building. But when we saw the shadows cast on the north side of Sacramento, we made sure that Hahneman didn't do it. But the Jordan Park Association had said: We can survive with this--they have been amazing. Other people--neighborhood groups--in the vicinity of hospitals usually just say no, no, no, no. No expansion, no change.

Transportation and the Master Plan

- Morris: Perhaps we could wind up with what's happened to transportation. Planning Department annual reports continually refer to studies and master plan revisions on transportation, and negotiations with the state. Doesn't the Planning Commission have to vote on state plans for freeways that go through San Francisco?
- Porter: Yes. The freeways, which are out (you don't mention them)--
- Of course, we did work on the undergrounding of BART. The Municipal Railway--they have to do their own planning of their buses and their routes. Mr. Finn, who is head of the transportation section of the Muni, sits on the Planning Commission.
- Morris: As an ex-officio member?
- Porter: Yes. He represents General Crowley, and he is very good in discussing transportation matters of importance with us.
- Morris: But it isn't often that transportation matters as such come to the Planning Commission?
- Porter: Well, the staff works on transportation, and when there are major changes, we know them. On street widening or a new street, they come before us.
- Morris: If you wanted to talk a few minutes more, I think we could finish up today and then you could have your Mondays back.
- Porter: [Laughter] All right, dear.
- [Tape turned over]
- Morris: Is the transportation section of the master plan something that has been revised considerably?
- Porter: The whole master plan is revised constantly.
- Morris: Why is that, that the master plan has to be revised?
- Porter: Because conditions change and you find your thinking of two years ago doesn't meet the conditions that have developed.
- Morris: Out there in the city. Is this both the kinds of population changes or economic changes?

Porter: There is some free development. [Laughter] There are areas that lie dormant for a long time. Then there is development, and that does change the pattern and the picture of the neighborhood. Now, I know in transportation there has been an effort of the Muni to run buses down Sunset Boulevard, and the neighborhood has protested it so much that nothing has happened. The idea is maybe still there, but the Municipal Railway and the Planning Department, which thinks it's a very good idea, feel they cannot proceed with it.

Morris: Because of the public response?

Porter: Yes.

XI CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Relationships between Government Agencies and Departments

- Morris: How about regional organizations and governmental agencies as they've come along; is this something that the Planning Commission gets involved in?
- Porter: Yes. Sometimes some of these agencies we feel infringe on our responsibility and authority. Of course, we now have the state requiring an environmental impact report on, not every piece of property, but on a great deal of property. The environmental impact report for Yerba Buena cost \$250,000. The plan is out the window. We have many of these reports which we feel--maybe not in Yerba Buena; maybe it's needed there--in many cases, if you build a building on Market Street, you spend \$25,000 for an environmental impact report, which is going to show you what you should know without the report--just exactly what more bulk and height will do on Market Street, which usually comes in as a negative report because it's part of the pattern.
- I think there are more and more agencies infringing and impinging on local agencies--not alone Planning, but on other departments.
- Morris: Where do you see this leading, or do you see any counter moves in the other direction?
- Porter: I think it can cause so much confusion and hold up action to an extent that there will be a revision of it. I think things go a certain length of time and they go too far and then there's a retreat. It's like the Board of Supervisors who voted against the Planning Commission in one era on everything. They liberalized the builders' rights.

Now the present Board of Supervisors will even vote more stringently than the Planning Commission if twenty-five people from the neighborhood come in.

- Morris: Do you think that the increased number of people from neighborhoods coming to various Commission hearings and Supervisors meetings, is that something that may cause a retreat of some of these overlapping regional and state governmental activities?
- Porter: No. I think every department takes itself very seriously and every department extends its authority as much as possible. I am sure we in the Planning Department have increased our skill tremendously.
- Morris: You said that the Planning Commission's staff had increased and the responsibilities have increased.
- Porter: Yes. I don't know whether we had even a \$250,000 budget in the Lapham era. Whatever it was, we had twenty-four people on the staff. The director received \$10,000; he now receives \$34,000. We now have a budget of \$1,400,000.
- Morris: That's quite a growth. When I dropped in to observe the Planning Commission last week, did I see that you were again president of the Planning Commission?
- Porter: No. Walter Newman is in China and the vice president presides when the president is absent.
- Morris: So you're vice president.
- Porter: Yes.
- Morris: I see. Is there as much debate over who's going to vice president as there is over who's going to be president?
- Porter: No.
- Morris: Does that mean that you've been vice president a lot of the time?
- Porter: Yes. [Laughter]
- Morris: Did you volunteer to be vice president?
- Porter: No. I was in the hospital when the election was taken. We had had the same president for four years. Now, sometimes the president is there for one year, which was the pattern I tried to establish.

When Roger Lapham, Jr. was president for four years, I was very anxious to have him president. I thought he was good and I was afraid we'd lose him. You know, some people are excellent presidents and they will give the time with that responsibility. But they won't if they're just a commissioner.

Morris: It doesn't fit into their game plan if they're not the president-- is it that kind of thing?

Porter: I don't know. That may be wrong. But he was so good, he was close to the mayor, which is very helpful if the mayor can talk to the president of the Planning Commission and likes to.

George Christopher was a very forthright man, and our director of planning did something that he didn't like. Whatever it was, the mayor thought otherwise and he shouted that Paul Opperman was fired. So Roger Lapham rushed across the plaza to the mayor and said: Look, you read the charter. You fire us, and then you get a commission that will fire him.

With this relationship Roger Lapham could go to George Christopher and say: I think if we could do so-and-so, if this cooperation with these other departments are needed, will you get it?

Joe Tinney worked closely with the mayor. I worked closely with Jack Shelley.

Morris: Did you find it helpful in the Planning Commission meetings to have been able to talk to Mr. Shelley about what was on the agenda and what you saw as the trouble spots?

Porter: The thing usually that you talk with the mayor about is getting along with other departments, making sure that they do not fail to cooperate or they do not undercut what you are trying to do. Sometimes this is done and people are oblivious to what they're doing. Or you say: If you could get us together--

Morris: Does the mayor do that? Does he have a cabinet of commission chairmen that he meets with?

Porter: Different mayors do it differently. I think the intergovernmental meeting is of tremendous importance.

Legislative Matters

Morris: There are a couple of items in your scrapbook about things like Proposition H, a ballot measure having to do with low-rent housing. Does the Planning Commission get involved very often? Is that a charter amendment that the Planning Commission designed?

Porter: Which is H?

- Morris: This was in 1961. It was a bond issue to build three thousand low-rent housing units. I wondered if the Planning Commission would get involved in a ballot measure--the preparing of it.
- Porter: The Planning Commission didn't have any part in the preparation. But on the open space ballot measure, I know Allan Jacobs had a great deal to do with preparing it, and I know that Walter Newman (who was chairman of the Commission) was very active there.
- Morris: How about things like state legislation? In the last couple of years we've had considerable legislation having to do with safety in buildings--earthquake and fire safety. I wonder if there are cases when the Planning Commission will go to the legislature and say: We need a change in a law in order to do what needs doing in our city.
- Porter: I know there's a widespread difference of opinion of the need for some of this legislation and the detrimental effect it may have on the city; whether removing all of the ornamentation of the beautiful old Spanish-type buildings is necessary or not, there's a difference of opinion among some of the commissioners.
- Morris: What happens when you have a difference of opinion within the Commission?
- Porter: In this case, no action has been taken. I know John Ritchie feels very deeply about the legislation, with which I'm not familiar because I'm not a downtown property owner, which I think insists that buildings over seven stories high have certain provisos; they're fire, I think, in this case. It means that all of the stories above the seventh floor will not be usable because the cost of rehabilitating them would be so tremendous. We are having a plethora of earthquake and fire ordinances. Of course, unfortunately, nobody knows what's going to happen when we have an earthquake--which buildings are going to go.
- The ordinance the Commission feels deeply about is the parapet ordinance, which was passed by the Supervisors years ago. But somebody found money for a new inspector, and now the parapets are being inspected, and it's cheaper to remove them than to strengthen them. So we're going to have some very ugly buildings.
- Morris: You feel that their historic and decorative value means they should stay?
- Porter: Yes.

Satisfactions and Guiding Principles of Public Service

- Morris: I've covered all the questions that I have. I wonder if there are things about your work on the Planning Commission that you feel have been particularly important or particularly disappointing in not getting accomplished that you'd like to comment on.
- Porter: I think the forty-foot height limit and the Ghirardelli Square was a triumph. Now there is a forty-foot height limit all over Russian Hill. This could not have happened in 1962; it would have been an impossibility. I think the increasing of the density controls--instead of having these R-3 that are four hundred square feet, they're not eight hundred square feet, and a rear yard of forty-five feet is mandatory. So this is preserving the open space.
- Morris: What kinds of things do you think have happened in San Francisco in the last twenty years since you've been keeping an eye on things, that wouldn't have happened without the Planning Commission taking an interest?
- Porter: I don't think the Golden Gateway would have happened without the Planning Commission taking an interest. The Planning and Housing Association, with Esther Born (wife of Ernest Born, the architect) really headed the group, working for the removal of the produce merchants from the area, which left it open for the development of the Golden Gateway.
- Morris: The Planning and Housing Association as a citizen organization has been important to the Planning Commission?
- Porter: Yes, and I think it was just as important when it was a small organization; maybe more so because its program was smaller and therefore they were more effective at the Board of Supervisors. I think it was important in achieving these things, and more so maybe than it is as SPUR.
- Morris: Have you ever felt at a disadvantage as a woman, dealing with things like height limits and setbacks and maps and blueprints?
- Porter: No, because the men on the Commission are lay people. We did have a few architects, but I learned as the men learned. I don't really think that they're conscious that I'm a woman, or that I go in there feeling I'm a woman. I feel I'm a commissioner with a responsibility. Did you have any sense that I was a woman when you looked in on us?
- Morris: No. I did notice that there were several women in the audience who seemed to be there equipped to speak to various matters.
- Porter: We were talking about the sewers, weren't we?

Morris: I missed the sewers; I'm sorry. [Laughter]

Porter: That's a tremendously controversial thing. This is where the state government says if we do not have our EIR for the sewers by December 6th, San Francisco will be fined so much each day and no building permits will be permitted.

Morris: For any kind of construction. This has to do with the quality of water let into the Bay?

Porter: Water Quality Control Board, yes. Of course, the sewer is tremendously important, and the people who have businesses there do not wish their streets torn up, the people who live there do not wish their businesses and homes interfered with. But you have to have sewers.

Morris: Is this related to building a new sewage treatment plant in the city?

Porter: Yes, really new sewers.

Morris: The storm sewers used to feed right into the Bay.

Porter: Yes. I think I read in the paper that some of them are as deep as four-story buildings.

Morris: Good heavens! Do you think that your early and ongoing experience in political campaigns has been helpful to you in working through the kinds of problems that the Planning Commission deals with?

Porter: Yes, because the people who make the ultimate decisions are the elected officials, and if you are used to working with people who've been in elective office, it facilitates matters.

Morris: Because things have to be argued through and compromises have to be made?

Porter: Yes. Also, you may lose one battle, but you also learn that you may win the next, and you don't sit there and make enemies; you just retreat.

Morris: I see. Is this part of the continuity that you've mentioned several times?

Porter: Yes. Also, I think continuity in the staff of the department is so important. When I first was a planning commissioner, there were only commissions in big cities. Every hamlet and town has its planning director now. The University is turning out professionals in great numbers. Some of these professionals come and work for two or three years, then go on to the next place where there may be a better opportunity, and then on to the next place; they have to operate from a short-range view and a short-range experience. They don't know the

Porter: community. The people who have put their roots down in a community are the planners that are imaginative and also accomplish constructive things.

Morris: That sounds as if you feel there is a particular role for the lay person who knows their community--a spot between the elected and the staff.

Porter: Yes, I think there is a role for the commissioner who is a liaison between the professionals and the public. But I think your good planner, because the commissioners frequently--or maybe ninety percent of the time--accept the recommendation of the staff, I think sometimes their questions or rejections are helpful to the staff.

The thing that's important is to have staff members who make a career in one place, like the landscape architect who retired the other day after twenty-seven years; there were people there who had retired last year after thirty years. A planning staff made up of people that keep moving from one department to another is not as strong as people who have remained there.

Remember, I mentioned Glenn Hall who worked for the Commission in the Lapham era. In those days, there was a great deal of open land. He walked the city and then came in with a green belt plan which has been achieved and bought, ending up at the top of Twin Peaks. He did it because he lived here, he knew the city; it was a devotion to the city.

Morris: Do you have similar kinds of things that you think are important to San Francisco, having lived here all your life?

Porter: Yes. I think the preservation of the residential areas, the control of them. I think the development of the downtown area in a proper way, and this does not mean I'm opposed to highrise because as you get low-rise you cover all of the land, and a straight forty-foot downtown could be very, very ugly. The higher a building goes, the less land it covers. I think the development downtown is of tremendous importance to the city. If you don't have it--a city either goes ahead or retrogrades, and you do not stand still. Some people think that you can have no more building, have things stay just as they are. That would mean retrogression.

I think Gerson Bakar's shingled apartments at North Beach with the swimming pool are excellent. I think the development he's doing out near the Olympic Club has been a great asset to the city.

We do talk about the loss of industry. We are making the effort, through the India Basin Butchertown to bring industry back. How successful we'll be I don't know because the modern formula seems to be huge areas for parking, and we haven't huge areas in San Francisco.

Morris: What about the sort of long-term, ten to twenty years in the future? Is there any thought on the Planning Commission that the private automobile may of necessity no longer be possible in another generation?

Porter: That is discussed frequently.

Morris: Does anybody believe it?

Porter: The thing that is being done is to prohibit garages.

Morris: That's a switch, isn't it?

Porter: Well, if you have no place to put cars, you don't have them. There has been this program in which private garages are now being discouraged. I understand the Supervisors overruled us on one we permitted downtown.

Morris: They removed permission for a garage?

Porter: Yes. Of course, I have said, at the end of discussions on no more garages: How many people here use public transportation?

Morris: What kind of an answer have you gotten?

Porter: None of them. There isn't a hand raised! I said: How is it really going to be enforced? Of course, the energy crisis looked as if it might take care of this, but at the moment--

Morris: The energy crisis seems to have gone away.

Porter: Yes, and we still have the same jam of automobiles.

We have, in some of our planning, tried to have protected streets. When the signs went up on Lake Street, the traffic dropped immeasurably. It used to be a race track for the people from Marin really, driving over, down Lake Street. Now they use California Street.

Morris: How about population changes within San Francisco that you've observed. Do you think they have some implications for what happens in the future?

Porter: I do, but I think we are being faced with what every American city is being faced with, in which there are the populations, there are the ethnic groups. But it is America, and I think the sooner people adjust and work this out, the better. I don't think you can flee to the suburbs to avoid it.

Morris: We've covered a tremendous amount of territory; is there anything you'd like to wind up with on the satisfactions of politics and planning.

Porter: You're a delightful lady.

Morris: It's a pleasure to talk to somebody who's worked so hard at so many things.

Porter: It's been a pleasure to work hard and to participate and try to achieve the things that you think are good. Everybody who's broken their heads and their hearts on working to achieve the things they think are good, at some juncture finds one thing that they've achieved works out badly. Don't you know that?

Morris: That's a caution yes. There's an old saying about that: Be careful what you wish for, because you might get it. Is that what you mean?

Porter: Just once in a while in a long time there is one project that you feel is so necessary, and you work for it, and then you achieve it and it either isn't as necessary or it may not be as constructive as you thought.

Morris: I hope you haven't had that experience.

Porter: I've had one or two. It would be impossible to live this long without having had it.

The thing is that our vision may be excellent as of today, and then changing circumstances that we never anticipated may make the dream we had or the plan we had not good at all.

Morris: One needs to be able to adjust to that and take the new information and modify it?

Porter: Yes, and use it.

Morris: That's very good advice. I think that might be a good place to stop. Thank you very much.

[End of interview]

Transcriber: Lee Steinback
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APPENDIX A: Invitations to Presidential inauguration ceremonies



*The honor of your presence
is requested at the ceremonies
attending the Inauguration of the
President of the United States
January twentieth,
Nineteen hundred forty-five.*

*Harry Flood Byrd, Chairman,
Kenneth Mc Keller, Arthur Vandenberg, Sam Rayburn,
Robert L. Loughton, Joseph W. Martin, Jr.,
Committee on Arrangements,
Edwin A. Hulsey, Secretary.*

*Please present the enclosed
card of admission.*



The Inaugural Committee
requests the honor of your presence
to attend and participate in the Inauguration of
John Fitzgerald Kennedy
as President of the United States of America
and
Lyndon Baines Johnson
as Vice President of the United States of America
on Friday the twentieth of January
one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one
in the City of Washington

Edward H. Foley
Chairman

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATIONS ON PLANNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

by Julia Porter, January, 1976

Over a span of thirty-two years, twenty-four of which I served as a member of the Planning Commission, I have been deeply impressed with the ever growing power and wide jurisdiction of planning. The scope of the 1921 Planning Commission was limited and the scope of the 1976 Commission is wide, encompassing assistance to and cooperation with the major city departments as well as some state agencies.

The first Planning Commission in San Francisco - one of the first in the nation - was appointed in 1919 and the first zoning ordinance adopted in 1921, included only five zones; two residential, one commercial and two industrial. This ordinance was superimposed on a city half built, but which had developed in a relatively orderly fashion so the designated areas were not too difficult to define. The coming of the Planning Commission and the Zoning Ordinance brought new controls on the types of buildings and where they could be built. The function of the Commission was largely that of deciding zoning cases.

As planning evolved, the first Master Plan for San Francisco was adopted in 1945. Then the planners moved into the fields of transportation, land use, open space, public facilities, public buildings and urban redevelopment, and set guide lines for the future development of the City. The Master Plan is a flexible document which can be added to or amended after due consideration by the Planning Commission and public hearings.

The decision-making process is perhaps the most difficult facing a Commissioner and zoning matters are prime examples. Property rights against public or community rights are involved. The factors influencing the decision are the Director's recommendation, usually based on the guidelines of the Master Plan for the orderly development of the City, the rights of the property owner, the rights of neighborhood or public groups, this latter frequently represented by large numbers of people. I believe the final decision is made at the hearing and is not based on personal prejudice, mass pressure - public or private, which can be tremendous - but on careful consideration of the facts as presented, and what the Commissioners believe is best for the future orderly development of the City. Sometimes Commissioners disagree and that must be attributed to individual judgement - good or bad - as viewed from where you sit. Zoning is the major instrument of planners. Through its use development is prevented or encouraged.

In 1960 the new Zoning Ordinance was enacted with 14 districts instead of five. This was based on floor area ratio, the height of the building being determined by land coverage. In an R-4 district (the second highest residential density) four times the land coverage was permitted. It never occurred to a

planner that a builder would cover less than 50% of the land, a maximum eight-story building was envisaged. However, the very resourceful builders of the Fontana Apartments covered only 25% of the land, erected a sixteen-story building, extending horizontally to provide maximum views for the apartments, and eclipsed any view of the water from the hillside homes on Russian Hill.

Two very active members of the Russian Hill Association, Marion Hinman and Vivian Walter, came to the Commission to ask for assistance in preventing future Fontanas on the northern waterfront. On the advice of the Director, James McCarthy, the Commission voted to put a two-year holding limit of 40 feet on the area. This was subject to the approval or disapproval of the Board of Supervisors. There was strong neighborhood support and strong neighborhood opposition, the latter including those interested in the large Ghirardelli properties. However, when Bill Roth purchased the Ghirardelli property and told the Supervisors he supported the 40-foot height limit, this limit was enacted into law and has saved San Francisco from the fate of Miami, Denver and Honolulu. Not since the 1920s when a 40-foot height restriction was placed on sections of Pacific Heights and all of the Marina had there been any major height control. This was the forerunner of the enactment of 40-foot controls in many residential neighborhoods.

Although I worked very hard for this, I do not subscribe to a 40-foot height limit for all of San Francisco, nor did the voters when they had a chance to express themselves. There are areas for highrise and residential districts where 40 feet or less must be the control. The highrise development in the downtown areas has added to the beauty of the City. Looking down Market Street east of Montgomery you see a beautiful region - 35-foot sidewalks, highrise buildings set in plazas and open space - the first realization of part of the dream for a beautiful Market Street to which the citizens of San Francisco were willing to pledge \$20,000,000. In condemning highrise perhaps we forget the shabby Market Street of ten years ago with four and five-story buildings - wall to wall and covering every inch of land. The amenities and open space around new highrise buildings is due to strict height and bulk controls of the Planning Commission.

In 1921, there were many major industries in San Francisco providing employment. In 1976, most all have fled and we have become a great financial, insurance, and business center, as well as the great medical center of the west. These are where our employments are now found. They are community assets which should be encouraged as well as controlled.

The deep emotion stirred by the Transamerica Building was epoch-making. Commissioners as well as the public divided on the issue. The building was built and is now one of the major tourist attractions in San Francisco. In addition it provides the boon of 6000 employments which we need. The highrise-lowrise controversy will continue. If it provides us with higher standards of building and does not prevent needed and good development we shall profit from it.

The power of the Planning Commission has been greatly expanded in the past two decades, and we now participate in many areas of planning with Public Utilities, Public Works, Park and Recreation as well as Redevelopment. The cooperation between these departments as it exists in 1976 was slow in coming. During the tenure of the late brilliant, imaginative Director of Redevelopment, Justin Herman, who was faced with the tremendous job of achieving the reality of construction and development, which he did magnificently, the role of the Planning Commission was secondary and I often felt we approved a fait accompli (if a good fait). Dealing with the multitudinous jurisdictions of the various city departments can be time-consuming and sometimes irreconcilable differences lead to defeat of a project. However during the past few years Planning and Redevelopment have been working closely together.

The great blow to San Francisco in this last half of the twentieth century was the scuttling of the Yerba Buena project by a judicial nod. A decade of work of top planners, architects, designers, economists, advisory committees and neighborhood groups had resulted in an imaginative plan of great beauty that would have become one of the outstanding redevelopment areas of the nation. Many of the interested participants have been so thoroughly discouraged that the possibility of realizing the grand plan seems almost nil. At this stage a new and simpler plan is mandatory. This should be made promptly by qualified planners, architects, economists, and designers in conjunction with a citizens committee chosen for their knowledge and ability. Prompt action on this would get the redevelopment process underway. This can only be achieved through strong leadership by the Mayor. Failure to act will result in a piecemeal, unplanned division of the land which may prove disastrous esthetically and economically to the City.

Another major problem facing the City which requires the cooperation of many groups is the San Francisco waterfront. In the mid 1960s when the Port was under State control, Cyril Magnin, President of the Port Commission, employed Arthur D. Little to do a plan for the waterfront. At the insistence of Mr. Magnin, this was done in cooperation with the San Francisco Planning Commission and their staff. The plan, which is as valid today as it was ten years ago, provided for shipping uses south of the Ferry Building and a gradual phasing out of the piers to the north to be replaced by commercial, marina and park development. The income from these projects was to be used for the rejuvenation and restoration of the shipping area. The Port, which was relinquished by the State to the City with rotting piers and in generally bad condition, is now the responsibility of the City. The rapid development of containerization has made the Port of Oakland with its miles of back-up land more attractive to shippers than San Francisco. This is evidenced by our constant loss of shipping lines. If at some future date the super-ships become a reality, then Hunter's Point, with its over seven hundred feet of deep water, could restore the Port of San Francisco. Meanwhile rehabilitation of existing facilities is imperative. Where does the money come from? Northern waterfront development or the taxpayer?

Ten years and an equal number of citizens committees later we seem unable

to agree on the development of the northern waterfront. B.C.D.C. [Bay Conservation and Development Commission] stopped the development of the Ferry Plaza. The ecologists stopped United States Steel. There will be no passenger dock or parks and plazas in that area, but it is not too late for the northern waterfront. Hard decisions must be made and citizens beyond the environs of Telegraph and Potrero Hills should be made aware of the port as a City responsibility. They should share in the determination of whether or not the Port is to be developed and, if developed, how. Again strong leadership of the Mayor is needed. Continued failure to agree upon action will put the burden of the Port on the taxpayers of San Francisco and of this they should be made aware.

The great threat to planning at this time is "judicial planning". At a conference in Vancouver a year ago with 5000 planners present the word from throughout this country was "the judges are doing the planning". So long as this continues, one dissident lawyer, one dissident citizen, can overturn the work of a community over years and reduce us again to inaction.

MRS. PORTER studies her new SPUR activities with William D. Evers and John H. Jacobs.



Environmental enhancer

JULIA PORTER's resignation from the City Planning Commission in January after long, selfless, indefatigable service pledged to the enhancement of San Francisco—inspired a gala civic luncheon. Hundreds gathered to honor her with the theme, "To a Great Lady from a Grateful City."

Planning is in her blood although her achievements—all volunteer—are recognized in fields of health, education, housing for elderly, high federal commission posts and politics.

Finishing the Planning Commission chapter that started in 1943 merely hikes her anticipation of her next activity. "If you are willing to work and competent, you will have many opportunities to serve," she said recently at the offices of San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR). Slim and smart in a brown knit dress with pearl necklace and pin, she grinned as she said to SPUR president William D. Evers and John H. Jacobs, executive director. "I really have time now for SPUR. You may be horrified."

"We are flattered," said Jacobs as he produced a copy of the 40-year-old papers of the association incorporation to show her her signature. "And we do have problems," said Evers. "Take your choice—planning, transportation, the waterfront, urban design and open space."

"I am interested in institution expansion," she said. "For example, San Francisco is a great medical center. The medical facilities are important to us. Emotionalists have caused us to lose the U.S. Steel building and we now have a perpetual slum there. We lost the Ferry Plaza. It is important that institutions be permitted to expand reasonably under control."

"We don't want to lose the minority jobs or the medical center standing. We want compromises that protect The City. In the last decade we have concentrated on legislation that prohibits. Nobody is dreaming the big dream. Look at New York or Boston. A city either grows and goes forth or it retrogrades. We are living in 1976," said Mrs. Porter who is in her 70s. "We must build for the future, build high in certain areas and protect the heights in others—such as the northern waterfront."

San Francisco can thank Mrs. Porter for a highrise-free northern waterfront, safe in its 40-foot height limit. During one of the most turbulent civic fights of 15 years ago, her resolution caused the Planning Commission to vote for a two-year holding period. The subsequent study resulted in today's permanent controls there.

A member of a pioneer local family and the widow of Dr. Charles B. Porter, whose family had a tradition of community contribution, she says her husband urged

her to enter local affairs. She started with the League of Women Voters, "which provides you outstanding training in getting the facts to make a judgment." In 1939 she was the local president.

Democratic Party activities, appointments by then President Truman to the Federal Women's Prison Board and as an adviser to the Department of Defense on women's housing, more than 40 years' work on behalf of the senior home The Heritage, heading Northern California efforts for the United Negro College Fund and muscular dystrophy are all part of her record.

"I'll be taking more responsibility now on The Heritage board," she said in response to requests to utilize her experience developing programs for the aged. "I can never retire. I shall die one day but I shall never retire."

Four mayors, Roger D. LaPham, George Christopher, John Shelley and Joseph Alioto, appointed her to terms on the Planning Commission. She used her broad spectrum of knowledge and special devotion to her native city faithfully and well, carrying out the purposes she helped spell out years ago in those original SPUR articles of incorporation. This could also be the Porter creed: "to unite in one organization individuals and groups of many points of view who are engaged or interested in bringing about intelligent public and private action directed toward better planning and better housing for the City of San Francisco."

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