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Scott Newhall

A NEWSPAPER EDITOR'S VOYAGE ACROSS SAN FRANCISCO BAY:

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 1935-1971, AND OTHER ADVENTURES

With an Introduction by
Karl Kortum

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
1988-1989

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Ruth and Scott Newhall with Tori (Victoria II) in front of Piru home. October 1989.

CALIFORNIA MONTHLY
December 1992

Scott Newhall
1914-1992

Former *San Francisco Chronicle* editor Scott Newhall, who spent 20 years turning a struggling daily into a media powerhouse, died October 26 after a short illness. He was 78. Newhall attended Cal for three years in the early 1930s, and his wife, Ruth Waldo Newhall '31, served as the *Chronicle*'s Berkeley correspondent. Though not a particularly tall man, Newhall always seemed a bit larger than life, and he brought zest and humor to his two loves, newspapering and sailing.

He joined the *Chronicle* as a photographer in 1935, rose to become executive editor in 1952, and later editor, and stepped down in 1971. In between, he turned a stodgy paper into a lively one, with splashy stories and headlines that often had more sauce than substance. "Larraburu Splits!" screamed a 1969 headline set in going-to-war type. Had the famed San Francisco bakery announced a stock split? No; it was launching a line of pre-split English muffins.

Newhall brought that same irreverence to his love of boats. In 1936, he set off an a round-the-world cruise, with his wife Ruth as navigator. Though they had taken a course in celestial navigation with Cal astronomy professor C. Donald Shane, Newhall couldn't tell a sextant from a sun sight. He intended to "pick it up along the way," he said. (The trip was cut short in Mexico when he was injured and forced to return for medical attention). A 1970 Newhall trip across the Atlantic with a side-paddle tugboat he bought in England was typical. "He made the entire crossing at five knots," said his wife Ruth, "and made port with just half a tank of fuel."

That crossing paralleled Newhall's attempts at a political career. In 1971, he ran for mayor of San Francisco, finishing a distant fifth behind, among others, Mayor Joseph Alioto and challenger (now Senator) Dianne Feinstein.

After leaving the *Chronicle*, Newhall and his wife resettled in Southern California, where he edited the family newspaper, the *Newhall Signal*, until 1988.

Though not above criticizing Cal—he wrote a famous 1958 editorial blasting the school for "Los Angelism" in its use of professionals in football—Newhall was a good friend of the University. In 1969, while tear gas filled the air and troops stood guard everywhere, Newhall and a group of Old Blues stood at Sather Gate and read an elegant statement about their love and support for Cal—and offered to put up their own money, take People's Park off the University's hands, and make it into a real park. That year, Newhall began to organize the group of steadfast supporters into what would later be known as the Berkeley Fellows.

He is survived by his wife Ruth and three sons, Skip, Jon, and Tony.

Scott Newhall in the 1970s

Cataloging Information

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Introduction by Karl Kortum, Chief Curator, San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park.

Interviewed 1988, 1989 by Suzanne B. Riess. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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INTRODUCTION by Karl Kortum

I laid aside Don Quixote when the Regional Oral History Office sent over this manuscript, and I started to read a different kind of adventure. But with a similarity or two. I had gotten as far as page 605 in the translation of the Spanish classic and there the good knight explains his quest:

> "It has been my desire to revive a knight-errantry that is now dead . ."

It seems to me that that comes close to explaining Scott Newhall's chore on earth.

The difference is that in Scott's case the windmills wouldn't have won.

There is a period where we have doubts: his remarkable youth. He hurls himself at life, often close to disaster, but after a rocky apprenticeship he escapes into a new world, the University and marriage to Ruth. He is nineteen, wild, still wild, getting worse. She will be an anchor to windward. He has to have her. The proposal is unusual:

> ". . we went up to Crockett where the old bridge used to cross the Carquinez Straits to Vallejo. We were in a 1931 Ford roadster . . . I said, 'Ruth, you see that telephone pole ahead of us on the side of the road?' She said 'Yes.' I said, 'All right. I am going to head for that pole, and I'm going to put the throttle to the floor, and if you don't agree to marry me, we're going to go together.'
>
> "I hit the throttle and off we went for the telephone pole, and of course before we got there she screamed and said, 'All right, all right, anything . .'"

Presently the horizons begin to broaden, and the old accomplishments (sports and boozing) are turned in for new, and the knight errantry, the chivalry (not at its

demonstrable best, perhaps, in the episode just described) is on more fallow ground.

But it is always there.

I should really not be so bold as to analyze my friend, my opaque friend. But I can't help it, now that I have a chance. I notice in the manuscript that when I tried to study him a bit, just a paragraph, he mutters in my direction "son of a bitch!" He doesn't like it. But as time goes on others will analyze him. And I have some privilege: I first got to know Scott forty years ago to the year before this thick manuscript came to hand.

It is thick and it is marvelous.

It is . . adventure.

Scott's brother and I sailed before the mast in the last Yankee square-rigger to round Cape Horn. We were carrying a cargo of lumber to South Africa. In this way I later came to know the editor and in due course, from the family farm in Petaluma, sent him a long proposal for a maritime museum/historic ships project for San Francisco. It was a true letter-to-the-editor (although a rather lengthy one), not a request for a job. But he liked it and got the Chronicle to back the plan and insisted that I come to San Francisco to try to carry it out. I found the offer irresistible. Scott paired off Dave Nelson, a resourceful young reporter, to work with me.

It could be said that Scott and I were sizing each other up at this time, although he was considerably quicker on the draw or I would still be up on the poultry ranch. This was my patron; this was our strategist (he had devised a plan to co-opt the publishers of all the four newspapers then in the city in support of the museum . . only then would we assault the Mayor's office). It behooved me to know this man.

"Your trouble is you think you have me figured out," he remarked one day.

No, Scott. Not then and not now. But let's try.

I suspect that he was overladen with charm from the start; it is the

mischievousness that I can't account for. (Those are two of the words that I choose to describe Scott; the other four are restless, penetrating, oblique, funny). The new cat in our house is mischievous; the one before was more passive. Genetic, I suppose. Scott had no reason to rebel, to be, as Ruth calls him, a "problem child." He had an enlightened, restless mother, who loved him and whose projects caught his fancy; he had an engaged, business leader father (president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce) to whom he was devoted.

It is his father, not himself, that Scott agonizes for, when after a visit to the bootlegger Joe Finnochio on Stockton St. and with the illegal siren on his Model A going full blast ("Here comes the great Scott!") he runs into a police car on Chestnut. And his father comes to bail him out.

The line later becomes more majestic: "Here comes King Scott!" and gets him thrown out of Lawrenceville Academy.

(Pullman porter at Chicago, "Isn't the young gentleman returning early?" The porters knew all the young gentleman going back and forth across the country to the eastern prep schools).

An aspect of this insurgency, but not the entirety I suspect, is that he was exploring and "experimenting" to avoid the "straitjacket of the social order of San Francisco society . . . I just absolutely, physically almost, had to turn and shut the door on the social fast lane. I think it is impossible to live this life where you go duck hunting in the duck season . . . and where you know exactly where you are going to be year after year by the calendar and there is no time left for free living and roaming around.

> "There are other things in life than entertaining and being entertained at a country club.
>
> "My mother never lived that kind of life. She always had something going."

Scott paints a pastoral: his early years at the family home in San Rafael and the summer home in Bolinas: "It was an enchanted, privileged life." The Newhalls and the Scotts going to picnics in a big, sidewheel Northwestern Pacific ferryboat

diverted from its usual paths. This because Great Uncle Arthur owned the Northwestern Pacific. Horses, boats, tennis, golf. Music; in due course, girls.

His mother was engaged in causes, many of her own devising. Every Sunday a pantheon of guests drawn from these activities--orphanages, religion, prisoner rights (Anna Newhall was a supporter of Norman Thomas, for instance)--were invited to the midday meal. Along with business acquaintances from here and there in the world connected with Almer Newhall's import-export company. Young Scott, and there is a clue here, was not bored or indifferent to this activity as might be expected at his age.

> "We'd come driving up from church and I would ask, 'Who is coming to lunch today?' I just loved it. The lunches and the guests were glorious and bizarre. I had to learn my manners there."

His mother presided over these disparate gatherings with skill: "She was absolutely a glorious hostess. She could laugh and charm everybody . . . She could talk and laugh her way out of anything."

We get an intimation of chivalry at the junior assemblies and debutante parties during these years: "I for some reason or other really felt very deeply about how these poor girls had to sit and wait to be asked to dance.

> "They'd have these so-called wallflowers. I used to walk around and literally try to dance with all of them. Some of them would sit there the whole evening and I figured their hearts were literally breaking. And they must have been . . I can remember them all dressed up with their white gloves and their organdy gowns--sitting on the side on a ballroom chair--sitting there and everyone can see that no one is asking them to dance.
>
> "As a result I didn't like the parties all that much because the girls I really liked and loved to kid around with, they were always popular and dancing so you didn't have to worry about their being lonely."

His athletic prowess was apparently considerable: "I was going to be the world's greatest tennis player." And he liked to read--"couldn't get enough." He used a flashlight to read under the covers after "lights out" in the junior quarters of his

parents home. Pirates, sailing, Two Years Before the Mast. But this mostly in winter; in summertime there was action--with his friends, horses, sailing in Bolinas lagoon. All the pleasures of a privileged life in an unspoiled and halcyon Marin.

His chaotic education began. Rather surprisingly, he enjoyed the rigidity of Mount Tamalpais Military Academy. "I was never smacked unless I deserved it . . I loved it. I loved the school. I admired the seniors. They had a great baseball team." To his regret he was transferred to another school. He liked the Military Academy, but nevertheless left behind two hundred hours of marching around the parade ground with a rifle on his shoulder that he still owed, punishment for infractions.

In due course he was sent to Webb School for Boys down in Claremont, a boarding school. It was not successful: "I loved to read but I wanted to be amused; I didn't like to study. I'd usually start out and I'd be the head of the class. I'd get straight 'A's' usually. Then I'd get into too much tennis, and pretty soon it would slip. Then as I got down into the 'C's' I couldn't stand it. So then pretty soon, I was down to straight 'F's.' It was a pattern, I'm afraid . ."

His parents were told about the Lawrenceville Academy in New Jersey, a larger prep school, rigid again On the first night everybody had to get up and introduce themselves. After this the housemaster asked if there were any questions. A "snotty kid from the upper East Side" got to his feet: "I'd like the fellow from California to stand up. I've never seen one."

"So it was good old Scott against the school. It was about an even balance. I had them all in line in about three or four weeks." He was actually soon on good terms with his schoolmates wherever he was enrolled. His conflict was not with his classmates. He misbehaved for other reasons: ". . . because if I couldn't be the best, I wanted to be the worst."

He ran off from Lawrenceville Academy to Philadelphia. He was readmitted. He was caught rewiring the lights in his room to the fire escape light connected with an automatic turnoff when the door was opened. He promoted a prize fight between two of the black house boys. He sneaked off to New York to play saxophone with the band in a 10-cents-a-dance hall. His end at Lawrenceville, tinged with majesty, has already been reported.

Back to Webb. He won four block letters in sports, "and that was the best thing

that ever happened. I thought, 'Man, I'm on my way.' And then I got in the bootlegging business. The headmaster found out about it and I voluntarily left school in the middle of the night . ."

I have repeated all this out of the text because mischievousness is ever appealing and it makes good reading. But much of it rested on a sinister foundation: "In my early life, at fourteen or fifteen, there was nothing but alcohol for another six or seven years."

"Drinking--they used to call it flaming youth . . . my brothers and cousins amused themselves with a lot of drinking at the country clubs, social clubs. I admired them. I wanted to be a raconteur, a boulevardier, bon vivant . ."

In those six or seven years, Scott drank more liquor "than most people drink in a lifetime." It had a firm lock on him and on the eve of his marriage he had progressed to the status of "a degenerate," at least in his mother-in-law's harsh definition. It was years before she forgave him for carrying away her daughter.

However, there is a fitful lodestone at work even in this tempestuous time. It was put in place when he was young, seemingly casually, but ". . Presbyterian doctrines stuck with me all my life."

There was no confessional box, Scott points out: ". . we had to struggle with it ourselves."

Here, in this narration, the interviewer asks, "The guilt?"

"You put the whole thing in one word for me."

In a novel, at this point, the reader could be forgiven for wondering how it will all come out. Will the charming young man with the flask in his pocket who was "brought up winning Charleston cups" come out on top or will his alter ego who has the guilt implant be the winner?

Suddenly hammer blows . . . and opportunity.

The family's fortune goes on the rocks, his father is broke. He gets a chance to close-study the sea. His mother wangles him into the University (and he finds it

a revelation). He wins Ruth. Scott hails these events consecutively in the following words: "best thing that ever happened" . . . "that cruise saved my life, seriously" . . "U.C. is the greatest thing that ever happened to me" and "it's the best thing I ever did." The relief--echoing a narrow escape--can still be felt after all these years.

These strokes of misfortune and fortune and opportunity seized, seriatim, enabled him to give up drinking at the age of twenty-one.

Scott got into the newspaper business with a stroke of his own imagination. He offered himself to the Examiner as a "candid photographer." "Candid camera" was a catchword of the day. He didn't know anything about photography, other than making snapshots, which he had done casually most of his life. He was equipped with a letter from the brother of the publisher of the Call-Bulletin that his mother had arranged. The letter said, "Take this young man. He needs a job." But Bill Wren, the hard-boiled managing editor, turned him down. ("I decided then and there forever that the Examiner was doomed.")

It was a different story at the Chronicle.

> "I walked in with my camera, unannounced . . I told the city editor (and I was terrified at the time) . . I said, 'Look, this is a candid camera. It is the new new wave.'
>
> "And he said, 'Yes, we've never tried that. We'll try it.'"

It was in the depth of the depression. He had got a job. He had his foot on the bottom round of the ladder of an institution that he needed and that would increasingly, as time went on, need him.

The editor (and general manager) of the Chronicle was Paul Smith, young, short, red-headed; in Scott's words, "the most dynamic personality who had come through San Francisco in a generation or two." Scott and Ruth were soon part of Paul Smith's way of life, which meant entertainment of the celebrities of the world in Paul's apartment, which clung spectacularly to the side of Telegraph Hill. Here came Anthony Eden, Herbert Hoover, Chiang Kai-shek, Randolph Churchill. Scott says, "Believe me, this guy was amazing. I keep coming back to it; I've never seen anything like it in my life."

The original Gold Rush Newhall was a seafaring man (or lad) and salt water continued to be a theme in the family. In the mid-twenties Scott's father chartered a fifty foot ketch, the Nootka, to take the family and friends to the State Fair at Sacramento. Scott, roaming the fair grounds, encountered the studio of a tattoo artist and sat for a tattoo on his arm. It was the sailorly thing to do. When he was done, the artist clapped a paper towel over his fresh work of art, held it in place with two rubber bands, and briskly accepted a dollar from the eleven year old. (Approximately eleven years old.)

The tattoo was painful and when Scott got back aboard the ketch, there was another kind of pain--the distress of his parents at what he had done. Things came to a head at Crockett, as the Nootka motored down river. The engine failed. The family and guests piled off and went home by train. Scott had been pestering to set sail on the vessel. I don't know what all the words were, but the culminating line from his angry father was: "If you're enough of a sailor to have a tattoo, you're enough of a sailor to sail the boat back."

So Scott and his younger brother, Hall, who was my shipmate in the square-rigger years later, slammed the big yacht out of Carquinez Straits and down San Pablo Bay, tack and tack, hour after hour. The winds were stiff; Hall was seasick but stuck to his post. Scott finally got her around Angel Island and completed the voyage by confidently picking up the mooring buoy off Sausalito.

The "cruise that saved my life" came later, after he had failed to graduate at Webb and had a job in San Francisco in the packing room of a wholesale drug firm. He was, we assume, not too happy, and drinking. The novelist Stewart Edward White was a friend of his mother, and at a dinner at the White's home in Hillsborough Scott was invited for a summer cruise to Southeastern Alaska. Although he suspected that it was a "put-up job," Scott jumped at the opportunity.

The Kuru was a sizeable craft, seventy-seven feet long, and beside the Whites and Scott there were only an engineer and a cook aboard. The traverse of the Inside Passage and beyond--out to Sitka--was demanding, and Scott shared in the navigation. Stewart Edward White was an accomplished master and he taught Scott the arts of piloting, which stood him in good stead the rest of his life. It was one of the reasons that I had faith in Scott later bringing a paddle tug, built for river work, halfway around the world. I shipped aboard as chief mate and

brought my son, Johnny, age eleven, as ship's boy.

In the Kuru there were long evenings at anchor in the bosky coves of Vancouver and lesser islands and the young sailor, when cribbage had exhausted itself, turned to reading. As chance would have it, he found three books aboard that charted three paths, three interests, that shaped his future. One was Mayan archaeology; another was Klee and Modigliani and Matisse--modern art--(he would enroll in art at U.C.); and the third was William Robinson's 10,000 Leagues Over the Sea, about circumnavigation in the ketch Svaap.

Scott had not worked long at the Chronicle--though long enough to master news photography and to have respect for its practitioners, even above reporters in many ways--when he came into a modest inheritance of $10,000. Nothing would do but that he and Ruth should buy a boat and sail around the world. The Mermaid was one of those splendid old-style San Francisco bay yachts with a swelling and capacious trunk cabin. But not new. Paul Smith joined them for the first leg of the voyage as they headed for Mexico.

Mexico is a theme in Scott's life:

> "There is a chivalrous echo still to be heard in Latin America . . in a so-called town would be one adobe hut with a fellow with his family and his kids and a few cornstalks and beans.
>
> "He'd come out, 'Welcome. Be my guest.' You'd say, you know, 'Don Eduardo, how are you today?' You'd think that you were in the court of Spain, for God's sake. These are sort of semi-Indians out in the country. It is an amazing place. Or was . . "

I have used the word "adventure." The Mermaid sailed into a kind of joy in the Mexican ports of the day and I think the cruise is still looked on fondly. But Scott and Ruth also sailed into severities. The first was starvation on a horseback expedition in search of stone idols on a sacred mountain. But things went awry, their guides deserted. They were in jungle. There wasn't enough to eat. Ruth's shoes, drying out before the fire, burned up one night; she went on barefooted. They tried to scrape a living off the land; they were starving.

> "You are out of your mind, believe me, when you go hungry for a couple of months . . It was really quite an experience, and I'm sorry

> that every one of our affluent American fellow citizens cannot experience it--what true poverty or hunger or malnutrition means."

But beyond starvation lay worse--disease, death's shadow, a leg amputated. I am tempted to say that all this marked another turning in Scott's life. But it didn't. Emerging from agony of body and mind, he went right ahead, if not voyaging on the ocean, at least with life itself. He had summoned a new resource, courage. Paul Smith dropped by the hospital in San Francisco and told Scott that his camera was "hanging up for him in the darkroom" when he came back. That must have helped. (Years later Scott was able to return the favor when Paul, now in New York, had fallen out of luck and health). In the event, Scott returned to the Chronicle on crutches to work in the library.

He mastered an artificial leg. He rewrote copy. He became editor of "This World." He had a chance to begin shaping the message.

In 1933 Scott and Ruth had returned from a trip to Europe on the S.S. Gerolstein which was a Jewish-owned ship from Germany. Most of the people on board were Jewish refugees. So the San Franciscans learned at first hand about the evil that was loose in that land. The '30s wore on: "Hitler's speeches were broadcast, we used to listen to them. It was the most terrible nightmare in the world."

Scott, because of an artificial leg, couldn't get into the armed services, but he managed to get to England on a baby flattop launched at the Western Pipe & Steel Co. in South San Francisco.

He leased a flat in London and for six months as a war correspondent covered that city under attack as well as the rest of Britain. Scott could go anywhere, see everything. He crossed to the coast of Holland and Germany in the dead of night aboard small British high-speed gunboats. They got into an engagement with a couple of German E-boats. He experienced an emotion that had not entered his life before, fear. "And the raw fear is a sour taste. I can't describe it. But I didn't like it much."

His stories were published in this country and some were picked up by the London press. As always, in the ward room of flattop, gunboat, or destroyer Scott hit it off well with the British naval officers. He offers a truism about war

--at least war up to and through that time--that appeals to me:

> "I have been talking about fright, the fear of this, that, and the other. But in the midst of war and fear there are parties, there are laughs, there are jokes. In wartime there's some sort of counterpart to the ugliness and fear; when people are living on the edge of disaster there exists a lot of hysterical laughter too. In the ward room we had more fun and laughs than any place I've ever been in my life. You know, when we were fooling along, not dodging bullets and fearing the enemy. War is grotesque . ."

It was a different, bemused Paul Smith who returned from the war, and the newspaper that he had made prestigious, if not profitable, started to suffer. Instead of ruling with a precise and sure hand, he began to travel a lot and there were long intervals when he was not in his office. A council of senior editors was formed to debate the paper's decline. Scott became a strong voice on it. George Cameron, the publisher and Paul's patron, was under pressure from the de Young family to take a stronger hand. ("Uncle George" had a cement company with which to support his tastes.) The paper was losing a million dollars a year.

A younger generation of the de Youngs, notably Charles Thieriot, demanded an attempt, at least, to get the newspaper out of the red. Meanwhile Scott was taking a night school class in welding at the Samuel Gompers Trade School so that he would have a means of supporting his family if the Chronicle disintegrated.

Paul Smith returned from a trip and Scott and another editor met him at the airport to tell him to be prepared for trouble. Followed a meeting between Smith and the ownership; Smith was imperious. He refused to reduce the staff. He resigned.

This was Black Friday. I remember it because on his lathe Scott had turned out an ashtray from a lignum vitae block sheave and fitted in it an old brass chronometer face. He gave it to me on that day and on the bottom, under glass, I mounted Time magazine's account of these doings. I still have it.
Scott turned in his resignation: "Unless I can be assured that the Chronicle will have an opportunity of success, I must dissociate myself from the Chronicle." He sent a copy to Paul.

This time we are at a turning. George Cameron and Charles Thieriot did not accept Scott's resignation. They asked him to be Executive Editor. He said he would accept if they would give him a free hand. It was a bold reach; it reminds me a little of the style of a man we are reading about currently, Mikhail Gorbachev.

Scott writes, "No successful newspaper can ever be published or edited by a committee. It has to reflect a single, focused energy . ." He knew what he wanted to do; he had been turning it over in his mind for years: "San Francisco after all is simply the Camelot of the Bay Area. San Francisco was purely a fantasy, a legend. But everybody, generally speaking, in Berkeley, Mill Valley, down the Peninsula, Oakland, wants to identify themselves with San Francisco. And that's why in the end they all had to read the San Francisco Chronicle. San Francisco has always been a touchstone. It is a fairyland . . "

> The interviewer: "Did you have an idea in mind for how to get readers when you came in in '52?"
>
> Newhall: "Pretty much. I felt strongly in the last few years that the horizon was unlimited for the Chronicle. Somebody could put out a paper that would absolutely captivate San Francisco."

So presently San Francisco (and its satellite cities) got Emperor Norton. As in the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt. They learned that the bones of de Anza, who had founded the city, had been discovered beneath the floor of a church in Mexico. De Anza was covered as if he lived. They got front page stories, straight-faced, about a movement to see that animals wore diapers to cover their private parts. A reporter was dispatched to Arabia Felix to (legally) buy himself a slave, specifically a slave girl, and write home about it.

In short, the editor's apprenticeship through age twenty-one had not been wasted. The only difference is that mischievousness had now been institutionalized. He reports it all with glee. And San Francisco began to be captivated. More Chronicles were sold every day.

Scott went to work to lure Herb Caen back from the Examiner. (Because all

this, of course, was a circulation war.) New columnists were created from reporters and other talent--Hoppe, McCabe, O'Flaherty, Gilliam, Temko, Gleason, Abby Van Buren, Beebe, Hinckle. Others were created from unlikely material, among them a lovelorn column for pets.

Circulation, which had sagged below 140,000 daily (the "Examiner had about 212,000") started to rise. The pursuit of Hearst's "Monarch of the Dailies," where Scott had been turned down the first time he ever asked for a job, was on.

Warren Hinckle reported the scene in the Saturday Review in 1973:

> "In 1962 daily journalism was still a competitive enterprise in San Francisco. The independent Chronicle and the Hearst Examiner were slugging it out for the city's breakfast table readership. The Chronicle was generally known as a liberal newspaper. Yet its liberalism was, as is most liberalism, schizophrenic. While the paper's Republican ownership consistently endorsed GOP candidates for all offices save dog catcher (that position not being elective in San Francisco), the reporters, many of whom were refugees from the eastern Establishment who would suffer anything short of hemophilia to live in San Francisco, were allowed relative freedom to attempt to write the other side in the news columns.
>
> "The Examiner, on the other hand, was paranoid. Still coasting on circulation gains achieved during Hearst's promotion of what became the Spanish-American War, the paper generally read like the house organ of the fallout-shelter industry. There were other telling differences, the women's pages of the two dailies providing perhaps the sharpest contrast. The Examiner's women's pages ran helpful household hints, bulletins about parish Bingo games (illegal but then sacrosanct in San Francisco), and formal photographs of Irish Catholic virgins in pageboy haircuts and junior prom decolletages who were about to commit the sacrament of matrimony. The Chronicle's were filled with Paris and New York fashions, lengthy descriptions of the vacation plans of publisher Charles de Young Thieriot's friends and neighbors, and sycophantic reports on the high jinks of San Francisco society, which was almost entirely Protestant and Jewish. The fact that a man presided over the Chronicle's women's section was slightly more than the monumental manifestation of male chauvinism it would

appear. City-room legend had it that the lengthy chain of succession of male women's-page editors had originated some years back when the last female women's editor splashed across the top of her Sunday section an eight-column headline that read: THE BACHELORS ARE BACK WITH THEIR WONDERFUL BALLS! (The Chronicle's women section has recently been liberated and is run by women again, but the section's name has been changed to just plain "People.")

"The Examiner's slow-motion fall from circulation grace during the late Fifties was due in part to the fact that the Chronicle, by virtue of its comparative sophistication and sheer deviltry, gradually became the San Francisco paper read by the burgeoning suburbs. More specifically, it was due to the P. T. Barnumship of Chronicle editor Scott Newhall, a crusading journalist with a magnificent sense of the bizarre.

"Newhall's operating assumption was that, since most readers got the news from television or other journals, they wanted something different to read over their Wheaties. So he filled the Chronicle with the comments, social notes, and opinions of more than twenty signed columnists. Newhall bought syndicated columns the way independent television stations buy up reruns of The Beverly Hillbillies and Star Trek. But the syndicated types were only a minor act in a daily Disneyland of local features that included a Dear Abby-type column for pet owners and the dribbling ministrations of 'Count Marco,' a former hairdresser named Henry [actually Mark. KK] Spinelli, whom Newhall perversely elevated to phony royalty and whose daily bill of fare on the women's page ranged from bitchy advice on the grooming of armpits to such connubial tips as that wives should take baths with their husbands. For the inventive count's detailed instructions on the ladylike way to climb into a bathtub while the lady's husband is watching, see page 49. ('How to Avoid Looking Like a Torn Blimp as You Enter the Tub.')

"Much of the news that Newhall used to plug the remaining open space between the ads was of his own invention. He once dispatched George Draper, an urbane and witty reporter with a drawl that defied description as either Southern or Colonial British, to Africa to do a series of front-page articles on the plans of a tiny republic to launch a

space rocket powered by a giant rubber band. [Actually, Art Hoppe. KK] Another Newhall concoction was a front-page series about a Southern California man who had started a society to clothe 'naked animals.'"

In the executive offices, however, all this was not a daily exercise in bounciness. Changing course had its grueling side. Scott appreciated the opportunity and sustained it by his charm. He charmed Charlie Thieriot and contrived to report to him only rather than to a committee from the family shareholders. " . . he left pretty much the whole product to me. He gave me the responsibility, the privilege . . and he tried to produce the money to keep the doors open,"

But Charlie was of different temperament, different background, a meticulous money person, conservative. The collaboration is a strange one, a tribute to charm, patience--and one can only believe a certain amount of good sportsmanship on Charlie's part. "He was painfully shy, So was I, but I tried to hide it," Scott says.

Scott has always liked metal. I do too. He finds solace in it; note the fondness with which he describes his coin collection, which he could keep in his office and shuffle during endless conferences. (He favored intuition over conference.) Or the string of antique automobiles which he restored with his own hands and Ruth's on weekends at his aerie, their home, at the top of the Berkeley hills. (Scott won the 1961 Concourse D'Elegance at Pebble Beach with a 1930 Packard rumble seat roadster he had brought back to life and style.)

I remember his tension during these start-up years for a new kind of Chronicle. One of his escapes was to get away at lunch time and go spend some time at the Western Junk Co. We would have a quick hamburger in preparation for visiting the new collections of old scrap metal brought to San Francisco by the Frucht brothers. A long prowl followed in this utilitarian shed on 9th St. Among many pieces over the years, I found an ice anchor and a cast iron stanchion from a Victorian fence that became a prototype, both used on the Balclutha. Scott found similar specimens--and surcease. There was an inner room, kept locked, where the best of the new collections were kept. From there I have half of a set of bookends in the shape of a leprechaun.

The journalism department of the University of California was of course shocked

at the aberrant metropolitan daily springing up in their own front yard. Professor Bagdikian (he mellows later and there is a long give-and-take recorded between him and Scott) deplores what Scott Newhall is doing, but reaches the bitter conclusion that "unfortunately Scott is a genius." There was less equivocal comment on the slopes below the old quarry where Scott and Ruth had expanded the tool shed into a home (quite a home). Scott left off going to the Berkeley parties where the guests would be "standing around the redwood parlor with the Navajo rugs on the floor and the Indian bead curtains, drinking an adequate little Napa Valley wine and munching on some cheese and listening to Scott Joplin or Dizzy Gillespie--and they were always telling me what a shambles the Chronicle was."

Because it wasn't a shambles. Another part of the editor is a concern for how the world is going, a concern that--then and now--took the form of brooding. It is chivalry's root. Evil to break a lance on--Hitler, Joe McCarthy, the loyalty oath. Scott went to England because, as best he could, he had to close with Hitler. He was thrown off a TV program, where he appeared once a week, because he took on McCarthy ahead of the rest. His theory of newspaper responsibility was that the editorials should lead; they should brand the paper. Editorials, Scott says, are where newspapers can get an edge on television. When he got his own paper later he wrote the editorials himself, strong stuff, and printed them on the front page. This muscularity was beginning to come through in the new Chronicle.

Anyway, he had a plan for the paper. But at the moment the intellectuals were in a state of agitation. (To get in that state, he points out, they had to buy the paper). However it wasn't unanimous. Lewis Mumford came west to teach at Cal for a semester: "What's all this anti-Chronicle stuff?" he asked. "I've been here six months and it's one of the greatest papers I've seen. Somebody said, "But there's never any news." He said, "Well, look, I looked at it yesterday, and every story that was on the front page of the Times was on the front page of the Chronicle."

The statistic was offered at a Berkeley party. Another statistic, in due course, created a party. It was held in the Chronicle city room in 1963. They had won the war; the newspaper had passed the Examiner in circulation.

Did Scott take out after the Hearst paper to get even for Bill Wren's snub? I wouldn't discount it. He holds to an array of simplicities, verities, that live cheek by jowl with the complexity in this mazy man. In any case, with success comes

power and he started to use it to see that Camelot, San Francisco, was not defiled: "Every guy has a little messiah in him." He was at a disadvantage here because the shaping of a city is largely a political process and at election time, if not in between, the ownership of this Republican paper insisted on a slate of Republicans in a Democratic city.

However, Scott is endlessly resourceful, and he had charm, and at that critical time of the year a string of candidates came to his office. On the wall was an oversize painting of a fake ancestor with a wooden leg, Sir Waldo Lovelock-Scott, who probably got a couple of glances and must have bewildered them. If they had taken the trouble in advance to look up the editor in Who's Who, they would have found that he was the chairman of the board of governors of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co., a company that had never existed. During the war I had found a Malay cannon made of brass half buried as a roadside post in the Chinese cemetery in Manila, and Scott had dispatched a reporter on an assignment in the Philippines with instructions not to come back without pulling up one for him. This graced one side of the room.

> "I think people--human beings--are the only thing we've got and I think they're the best thing we've got, and I've always loved them; I've always tried in the newspaper business to kid them along into having a little more fun and doing a little more for their neighbor."

I suppose that Scott's method with his visitors could roughly be grouped under "kidding them along." It may be that I have used the word "charm" overmuch. It might be better to say that he has a singularity that somehow makes him--and in a quiet way--the central figure. And I have already mentioned with respect, awe really, his penetration. Never have I encountered anyone with such laser-beam ability to read and map out the next fellow's motivations. As, subsequently, a situation begins to unfold, one wonders if he hasn't been in the presence of prescience.

These talents were increasingly put at the service of San Francisco on what he calls here "the cityscape" . . a sensitivity to architecture, city planning, the freeway intrusion. Once the rigid little ceremonies of election day were past, Scott had a free hand with how the news was emphasized. He says that he was playing Lorenzo de' Medici. He used Dave Nelson as a field man at city hall and his sometimes icy secretary, Dolly Rhee, a cousin of Syngman Rhee, the President of South Korea, acted the part of enforcer.

Charlie Thieriot and Randolph Hearst used to meet every year at a duck blind up near the Marysville Buttes. ("There's one thing only that all these loyal Hillsborough people do as religiously as, say, the Pope celebrating Easter mass in St. Peter's Square. They all go duck hunting, starting with the first day of duck season.") One time, after the Chronicle had pulled ahead of the Examiner, the two publishers in the duck blind got to discussing a joint operating agreement for handling the advertising, mechanical production, and delivery of the newspapers. This would save a great deal of money for both papers if it could be brought about. Although a couple of other newspapers in the country had achieved it, the path was mine-strewn because of laws against monopoly.

But the process was started and Scott attended many sessions, the best of lawyers present, in a room in the Clift Hotel. He liked Randolph Hearst, but is contemptuous of the "corporate" newspaper talent who attended as well. In the end the consolidation was worked out, was legal, and the Examiner moved into an expanded Chronicle plant, with their editorial offices on the second floor. The government and the city and the subscribers were assured that the joint operating agreement was entirely about the business end--the editorial departments would be independent.

Scott posted a notice to his staff: Any Chronicle person found on the second floor would be fired.

The Chronicle kept the morning field to itself, the Examiner went to afternoons, and the curve that Scott Newhall had instituted kept rising; the paper was making more than a million dollars a year before the merger and now it started to spiral up into multi-millions. The circulation war was over and things were getting dull. Scott makes reference more than once in this narrative to the fact that he gets bored easily.

As a boy I saw a model of a paddle tug tending a model of the Flying Cloud in a showcase in the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park. In 1946 there were fifty-nine paddle tugs still operating in Britain, but by the time the above events unfolded many years later there was only one left, still in use, at a small coal port a few miles down the North Sea coast from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Scott and I resolved to add her to the San Francisco historic ship collection and Scott and a cousin flew to County Durham to size up the situation.

The Old Trafford, now merely a relief tug to modern diesel craft, was laid up most of the time, but by chance on this winter's day she had steam up and they went out on the little harbor at Seaham and were allowed to handle the controls. Scott was enthralled with the handy little craft, each paddle with its own separate grasshopper engine of antique design.

The only trouble was that this last paddle tug boat was bespoke by Britain's National Maritime Museum and they planned to scrap her to get a few large parts for display in their buildings down at Greenwich on the River Thames. However, Scott, his prescient antennae probing the frozen air of the industrial north, discovered that a second paddle tug that was supposed to have been long ago scrapped, wasn't scrapped. He arranged an exchange at his expense of the parts needed by the Greenwich museum for their display from this second tug. She was the Eppleton Hall, dismantled, pretty much a wreck, canted over on the mud at the ship breakers, her wooden decks disposed of by building fires on them preparatory to the cutting torch. However she still contained the necessary parts for the display.

Scott got a letter from England about six months later saying that the Greenwich museum was reneging on these arrangements for administrative reasons, whatever that means, and that Scott probably couldn't get the vessel to America anyway. We held a council of war at Foster's cafeteria, corner of Polk and Sutter, and resolved to go to England and hijack the Old Trafford (now known as Reliant) to keep her from being eviscerated. As a vehicle I suggested forming The Friends of the Greenwich Museum; Scott legally incorporated this organization, and registered the faraway tug as a yacht in Paraguay. Cards were printed. Lest they feel thwarted, the costs of recovering the Eppleton Hall parts for their display were to be left on the gatepost for the Greenwich museum. (A not inconsiderable institution, I might point out, with buildings by Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren.)

The "Friends" cards were to be used by a British movie critic by the name of Otterburn-Hall who made occasional submissions to the Chronicle. Scott felt that Otterburn-Hall could play a Bertie Wooster-ish role as a friend of the Greenwich museum, what we call a ship buff, found on the fringes of our kind of museum, "with scarf, blazer, and thick rubber soles so that he would appear to bounce along with the ferocity of a cocker spaniel." Otterburn-Hall recruited a beautiful English girl named Hilary James out of movie public relations who would serve, with a cigarette in a long holder, as his secretary.

All the pieces were in place. A crew to move the tug to Rotterdam was flown over from San Francisco to Newcastle and holed up in the Royal Turks Head Hotel. The caper was purposely planned for a Saturday. From London Otterburn-Hall called the coal company who owned the tug, asked the price, and flew north with Hilary James and a suitcase full of ten pound notes.

On their arrival at Seaham to carry out the transaction, the coal company secretary and his assistant introduced themselves. There were two other men present. Hilary pleasantly asked their names. The reply was that the names didn't matter: "We are with the Newcastle police department."

The jig was up.

The giveaway had been the call from London asking the price. A true "Friend of the Greenwich Museum" would have known the price. The coal company secretary had called the museum and unfortunately some zealot was at work there who identified this as a probable American beachhead. Otterburn-Hall says he just started talking--talking to fill up the air and avoid questioning, talking to avoid an interval when the bracelets might be slapped on.

Scott and I got out of England fast (I remember with fondness the thrust in the seat of the pants as the jet tilted up at Heathrow airport), but not before Scott had bought the derelict tug from the shipbreaker. We left behind Bill Bartz, another shipmate of his brother's and mine from the bark Kaiulani, to resurrect Lazarus. Scotland Yard duly arrived, but the principals were long gone. Bill pleaded innocence. When things calmed down, we returned, and despite forebodings from the old towboat hands on Tyneside, succeeded in steaming this river tug to San Francisco. The voyage occupied half a year.

Back at the newspaper, with prosperity the horizons had started to shrink.

> "The Chronicle had one great weakness, the foreign news coverage. And I will go along with any editorial critics of the Chronicle on this score . . I wanted to start a foreign service, because I felt the Chronicle was on the threshold of being a truly great, recognized newspaper. We had enjoyed a lot of fun and games to get the paper in this position . . I felt after the merger that we would have enough financial energy that we could establish a foreign service and get more foreign correspondents out and take on some of the establishment

papers in the country. Hell, we could have done anything!"

But, as Scott says, ". . it was not to be." Charles Thieriot and his family were not prepared to spend the money to establish foreign bureaus. Scott makes rueful comparison with the Los Angeles Times which, under young Otis Chandler, expanded in this style to a position equivalent to the New York Times and the Washington Post.

Scott bought his own newspaper in Southern California, the Newhall Signal, in the seat of his forbears. New worlds to conquer. Something to leave to his children. The San Fernando valley had filled up, and a rogue wave of humanity was rising to breast the mountains and spill into this next valley north. There was work for a caring newspaper.

But, San Francisco? In my opinion, Scott is one of the two greatest San Franciscans of all time; the other is Phil Burton. I say that simply because of what they left behind. In Scott's case three museums--three major museums--a cultural heritage. Burton left us a natural heritage, our seashores. They are encased in a vast national park that he created.

Scott additionally left something else, I notice. He is becoming a San Francisco legend.

Looming up alongside the Western Junk Co. on 9th street, there stood a rectangular, authoritative looking building all faced in terra-cotta. This was the headquarters of Gladding, McBean & Company, terra-cotta manufacturers, and Atholl McBean, its proprietor, married into what Scott calls the "family tribal group," the endlessly ramifying Newhall cousins and uncles and nephews and nieces. Atholl McBean, according to Scott, considered all Newhalls morons. In hard times, Ruth told me, some of the cousins lived off their capital without giving it much thought. McBean, a fierce tycoon of the old order, moved to put a stop to all that, and was named president of the Newhall Land & Farming Co. with its 125,000 acres. He held it together with an iron hand--this is part of the scene that Scott got involved with when he moved to Southern California.

Another was the high percentage of the self-righteous among the population--"Not like San Francisco, believe me," as he kept telling me on his trips up to this

city. A good look-in on Scott was written by a young journalist named John Luce at this time when Scott had just bought the Newhall Signal but was still editor of the Chronicle. The story ran in San Francisco Magazine in July and August, 1968. A Ku Klux Klan rally, about a hundred strong, some armed, had leased a box canyon east of Newhall for a rally. The press and T.V. were present.

Luce describes Scott in a scene among his new subscribers:

> "The affair got going after dark as the head Klansman, a 'Reverend' named Fowler, stood on a grassy knoll and harangued the crowd with cries of violence and threats of the 'Jew-Commie-Nigger Conspiracy.' Scott, in working clothes, had come out from the Signal with his sons and was standing near the speaker. At one point, when he had the crowd well worked up, Fowler spit out, 'We're the superior race; and the superior race don't want no niggers!' Scott fired back, 'The superior race doesn't use double negatives.'
>
> "From all reports, the crowd could have killed him then. Fowler screamed, 'If they're any white niggers here, get 'em!' A group of rednecks pushed towards Scott, yelling 'Get a rope!' But Scott stood his ground. Jon, Tony and Skip shielded him from the front, and Charles Howe, the Chronicle Military Editor covering the rally, stood behind Scott, protecting him with his body. 'I had my hand over his heart,' Howe said later. 'It was beating perfectly regularly. The man was utterly unafraid.'
>
> "Finally, the press saved the day by crowding in to find out who Scott was. 'I am Scott Newhall,' he told one reporter. 'I am Executive Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, Publisher of the Newhall Signal and a drag racer--class D, modified. I dropped in to listen to this unfortunate and pathetic bunch expressing themselves in uncivilized language, like children in a pissing contest. Most of them seem to be unsuccessful middle-aged deer hunters and high school dropouts. My family has lived in this valley for one hundred years. And if there's anything I detest, it's bad grammar.'"

The California valley of his ancestors was to Scott a precious thing. If planning for the wave of immigration was done right, it could be a model for all the burgeoning west. And the Newhall Land & Farming Co. was in a position, as

Scott saw it, to show the way with "so much beautiful land on our books at a cost of almost zero." He threw himself into the fray. He proposed going to Europe to arrange for fountains by Picasso and Miro to be centerpieces in a series of "villages," this to avoid crowding the land. He made portfolios to demonstrate his ideas.

But aesthetic conscience tends not to be the hardiest survivor in a corporate board room and while Scott brought considerable enlightenment to the design of the new city of Valencia (which he named) he did not have his way fully. And off the Farming Company holdings, up the draws and on the hilltops, venal Los Angeles County politics linked up with developers for an unregulated land rush.

At one point Atholl McBean came around a little, it should be recorded. Getting up in years, he offered Scott the job of president of the Farming Company.

It was not taken, of course; the Signal was Scott's center. In every metropolitan city room, I understand, a dream recurrently surfaces among the newsmen--to own a little paper in a country town. Well, here it is, in fascinating detail. Scott's formula for the Signal (jocularly referred to as "hated by 98% of the people, read by 100%") was to inform his readers even if it enraged them.

But I cannot comment too usefully on Scott's adventures in Southern California. He was then at a distance; I hope that I have introduced him adequately from knowledge closer at hand. He made a roaring success of the Newhall Signal, a thin throwaway when he bought it (a few years later: " . . on Wednesdays it is thicker than the Chronicle.") and in due course it was profitable to the extent of a million and a half dollars a year. But he had been obliged to borrow money from the farming company to buy it, and the man of terra-cotta, Atholl McBean, called the loan because he was put out with one of Scott's editorial positions.

Scott, to raise operating capital, had to give an option to buy to an eastern syndicate (this in the early, lean days of the paper), and later they exercised the option.

Part of this agreement, signed at the time, was that he would not start another newspaper for ten years. The day the ten years were up and he was in his early seventies, he started the Citizen, Ruth Newhall editor. The staff loyally came

over from the Signal . . . all except one, their son Tony. With time still to go on his non-competition clause, Tony was prevented by court order instituted by that paper from joining his parents. This took the heart out of the operation. The paper was never to be a heritage.

Always a new chapter. I give you a fairy story, no less. It had evolved in the course of the above events. At one point in a family-wide division of shares involving a couple of dozen people, Scott had stuck up for a distant, very distant, elderly relative named Alice whom he had never met. She had been disinherited by an uncle, Walter Newhall, because he did not approve of her marriage. Scott thought this unfair and churlish and persuaded everyone that the assets be distributed with an even hand. Years went by and . . lo and behold, Scott and Ruth were named heir and heiress of her estate. In due course it came to them and they were rich.

(Scott had not been wealthy at the time of the Eppleton Hall; I remember telephone calls from ports like Dover and places on the Spanish Main telling Ruth to sell off another antique automobile to fund the next step of the voyage.)

Scott and Ruth live in a castle erected in front of a spectacular backdrop, the dry Tehachapis. In contrast to the stark mountain range, the castle is surrounded by old trees and lawns so that the air is balmy; it is literally paradise on earth. It is not really a castle, but there is a stone tower at one corner with battlements on top. The architecture of the rest of the house is Victorian-elaborate with thirty stained glass windows, many of great beauty.

It burned down.

A painter was using a blowtorch on a day when the hot Santa Ana winds were blowing off the mountain and the Newhalls weren't home.

Scott and Ruth assembled a band of artisans and the first thing that was done was to pour a concrete slab in the exact shape of the missing house. Under the slab, in the basement, was created a vast machine shop with lathes from Austria and milling machines made in Ohio. Scott worked in the basement and Ruth worked above ground with tile and marble and glass; together with the crew they erected an exact replica of the house that had been destroyed. Only better--

better workmanship.

Ruth calls it "our greatest adventure."

So we leave them.

The reader, be forewarned, has to get used to Scott's way of distancing himself from the narrative. There is a lot of action here--hazard, pain, things plunged into, imagination unleashed, successes, things that didn't work out, triumphs--but he often keeps a space between himself and the event and, more puzzling, himself and the reader.

He comes that way.

As I see it, his circling and his glancing metaphors are a way to conceal, with a modicum of modesty, his uniqueness. They are a cover drawn over brilliance.

There is another aspect: "I hate the words right and wrong." After assertion after assertion--the philosophy of an opinionated man as he has worked it out--the reader will find added: "I don't know." Or equivalent. Scott is wary of the cosmic.

Be prepared for perversity. There is an authentic little spat with Ruth preserved in amber. Don't take everything written here at face value, even some of his comments on what it means to be a journalist. It is a rhetorical posture to have some fun.

But when he says that newspapers "are the only trench we have against the encroachments of a dictatorial society" we are out of the fun and into what he deeply believes.

March 1990
San Francisco, California

Karl Kortum, Chief Curator
San Francisco Maritime
National Historic Park

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The great challenge in writing about Scott Newhall is to create as gracious a piece of prose as he would write, or wish to read. Journalists outdo each other in felicitous phrasing as they model verbal profiles of Newhall--the man and the editor. Appended to this oral history is one such piece. Karl Kortum's introduction is the most recent manifestation. Take their word, Scott Newhall is a treat to be around. And the text of these oral history interviews should make that abundantly clear.

Before indulging in my own Newhall adjectives, first, the background for the Scott Newhall Oral History. In 1967, when Scott and Ruth Newhall were living at One Hill Road in Berkeley, Ruth Newhall began to interview her husband. She undertook this in response to an invitational letter from the head of the Regional Oral History Office, Willa Baum. In the May 26, 1966 letter to Scott Newhall, Mrs. Baum wrote:

> "...we propose to shatter precedent by asking you to be interviewed by your wife. She knows more about your career than any of our regular interviewers could find out, and her experience in journalism and history writing quality her as to training. We would hope to do a full autobiographical interview, perhaps five or so recording sessions, including your childhood and family recollections, your education, especially at UC, your marriage while still in college, your travels, and then most fully, your newspaper career. In as much as some of the recent developments such as the merger of the Examiner and the Chronicle will involve considerations of privacy, I expect you will want to put all or a part of your manuscript under seal for a while. Be assured that nothing you say will go beyond our office staff until and unless you release it for scholarly use."

The interviews of husband by wife began that August, but very soon Ruth Newhall was distressed that it was getting much too lengthy.

> "Possibly an outside interviewer could keep it more under control, but on the other hand it would mean appointments to be kept, which would make it difficult, if not impossible."

Both Newhalls were by then also much involved with their newspaper in southern California, the Newhall Signal. Of the interviews that Ruth Newhall was able to complete, one is included as Chapter XVI of the memoir that follows, and the text is evidence for how divided energies were between the San Francisco Chronicle and responsibilities in the north, and the Newhall Signal and concerns in the south. The outline of the interviews was moving far beyond the scope originally suggested.

> "Still to be covered," said Ruth Newhall in a letter to Willa Baum, "are the details of the merger, the family companies (Newhall Land and Farming Company) of which Scott is a director and officer, and the planning of a new city in southern California by those companies... A little more about The Signal (the newspaper which he owns in Newhall, California)--the building of a small-town paper. And, something, if it seems appropriate, about his overpowering hobbies, into which he throws fantastic energy. They have included telescope-building, masonry and stonework, easel painting, coin collecting old car restoring, jewelry designing, archaeology, and--currently--he is at this moment outside putting together a super-powered drag racer..."

Our files are bare of correspondence until May 18, 1982 when a letter to Ruth and Scott Newhall from Willa Baum reads:

> "It was good to see you at the Class of '31 Reunion luncheon. But what bad news that all the tapes for Scott's oral history were burned. I did not speak to you then about redoing them, for I knew your first task was to rebuild your home. If that is under control now, perhaps it is not too soon to say that the loss of those tapes should not be allowed to be a permanent loss. So long as you both are all right, they can be re-recorded... Would you, Ruth, be willing to do the interviewing again? Or should we think about another interviewer, who would require your guidance for questions?... However it gets set up, it seems to me essential that eventually there be a full and detailed oral history of Scott (and Ruth) Newhall in The Bancroft Library. From that could then be drawn a trimmed down publishable memoir."

That house that burned, with the tapes inside, was The Mansion in Piru. It was built between 1886 and 1890, and purchased by the Newhalls in 1968. In 1981, when restoration was four months from completion, a fire destroyed everything but the circular stone tower and chimneys of the Victorian landmark.

Ruth Newhall's response to Mrs. Baum's 1982 letter was that Scott said it was just as well that the tapes were lost in the fire because they were too long and rambling. They were planning to redo them. Ruth again agreed it was more practical for her to do the interviewing. "I know the story so well, I know which direction the questions should take, and I am also in a position to catch him at odd hours. The most important part of his history is that dealing with the San Francisco Chronicle and I think we can still do a good job on that."

In fact two transcripts were salvaged from the fire, and they are both incorporated in the oral history that follows--Chapter XVI and the appended "On Being a Newspaper Photographer."

The Newhalls had things to do from 1982 to 1987 other than redo interviews, as the oral history in covering those years makes clear. And so a second round of interviews of husband by wife was never begun. For one thing, Ruth by then was the editor of the Newhall Signal, and Scott's was the most significant newspaper voice in the newly-designated Santa Clarita Valley, and in the town the Newhall Land and Farming Company built.

But in 1987 the proposal to interview Scott Newhall came up again. Karl Kortum, an old land and seafaring friend of Scott's, and the Chief Curator of the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park, reminded the Regional Oral History Office that there was still a great story to be recorded. And this time the San Francisco Chronicle's assistant to the publisher, Phelps Dewey, and publisher Richard Thieriot, joined the Newhalls and the Newhall Land and Farming Company in raising the funds to do the oral history. That meant that interviews with Scott Newhall could be conducted by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library.

Of course, by the late eighties, twenty years after the first oral history proposal, the story had doubled in length. The past was twenty years further back, the present was full of problems with the Newhall Signal. Numerous witty and impassioned words had been written by and about Scott Newhall--his response to witless and unfair charges in 1987 against his paper, its editor, and the Farming Company is in the appendices--a version of Shangri-la was in place in Valencia, California, The Mansion had been rebuilt within an inch of perfection, and there were new stories to be told.

The interviews were scheduled to take place in San Francisco, where Mr. Newhall was in residence at 1050 North Point, overlooking the maritime scene, every six weeks or so--in town to attend to personal matters, to consider silver pieces to add to his collection, and to see people. Dolly Rhee, Scott Newhall's secretary since 1942, and still briskly organizing his life, arranged the first interviewing date.

Mr. Newhall and I met for a good big restaurant lunch of crab on French bread--the first of several lunches, same selection--and we talked about doing the oral history. I read numerous clippings and articles supplied by Ruth Newhall and Dolly Rhee, background on the Bay Region's press and on current issues in newspapering, I relived the voyage of The Eppleton Hall, decoded back issues of the Newhall Christmas greetings, read Ruth Newhall's The Newhall Ranch, and studied more recent material on Newhall doings in southern California.

While we were in some sense always dealing with the past in the interviews, the present was everpresent. In August 1988 things at The Signal were coming apart. The owners, the Morris Chain, and the publishers, the Newhalls, were severing relations. The Newhalls were contemplating starting a competing paper. [See Appendix F.] True to what seemed to be a predictable ten-year cycle, yet another series of provocative articles on the San Francisco Chronicle had come out in San Francisco Magazine [November, December 1987]. Not an ideal time for "emotions recollected in tranquility," but no matter. We carried on.

In February 1989, when the interviews were winding down, I telephoned Ben Bagdikian, recently retired dean of the University of California's School of Journalism. I wanted suggestions from him for global journalistic questions. After a few minutes of conversation I was inspired to ask if he would care to be in on a three-way interview with Scott Newhall. He was agreeable. He had not met Scott; although he had written critically about the San Francisco Chronicle, he had always admired its editor. Moderating that taped conversation--Chapter XIII--was fun. It was a meeting of two souls wise in the ways of newspapers, and with plenty of dislikes and opinions in common.

In the meeting with Ben Bagdikian, Scott Newhall reviewed for a new listener a number of the subjects that had been discussed at length earlier, themes that would come up again in a windup interview. If this were a biography en route to publication, the repetitions would be eliminated. As it is, they are left, and understandable in the context. In fact their reiteration underscores their importance for Scott Newhall; while this was oral history, it was also current history, living history.

The final taping, in July 1989, took place far from the maritime orientation of the Newhall's San Francisco apartment. I was sent an airline ticket by the Newhalls that transported me from Oakland to Burbank. There I was met by Mr. Newhall and Carlos Garcia, the ranch manager, and Carlos drove us through the lands of the original Rancho San Francisco--Scott giving the tour commentary--from old Newhall, California to new Valencia to Magic Mountain. The observations of this great-grandson of Henry Mayo Newhall, the man who gave his name to the town, were rueful, ambivalent, bemused, apologetic. "These people don't read newspapers, they don't have time." Then we headed west through miles of orange groves, home to The Mansion.

It was a southern California scene. We drank freshly-squeezed orange juice by the pool, a blue oval ringed with water-spouting turtles. The pepper trees, arching over to shade the patio, dropped the occasional leaf in the stippled water. White marble goddesses stood their ground. The grass was bright green, and across it came a Great Dane to intrude into everything.

We taped some conversation that afternoon, in part using an index of questions put by two journalism historians, Peter Mellini and Lynn Ludlow. Then we had dinner, and a tour of the awesome basement workshop where serious projects were afoot. The house itself was full of delights, many of them silver, or on canvas. The epergnes were stocked with chocolate M&Ms. Scott played the piano.

That day, July 12, 1989, was a great day for my hosts. They had just heard that one of their least favorite editors had been asked to leave his post at The Signal. It was a vindication, and perhaps an indictment of the reviled "investigative journalism" school. The phones were ringing; Ruth and Scott Newhall were in demand, for comment and advice.

The next morning I woke to the wet sounds of a fountain, and a proprietary view across orange groves to dry hills. I went out to walk, herded by the large dog. When I returned Ruth Newhall was stirring together pounds of breakfast--dry stuff, buttermilk, canned stuff--for the dog and a dozen cats, and after that she and I taped a brief family history interview. Later the three of us drove a short ways to see the bell at Camulos that came to the Mission San Francisco from Russia via Sitka, Alaska. The Mission and Camulos were the setting of Ramona, a novel of a far earlier southern California, and that day the rancho world seemed very much alive and well.

I left the bulk of the transcribed, audited, and edited oral history with the Newhalls on that trip in July. In short order Ruth read through it. Then Scott brought it up to San Francisco where he tackled it with the help of Dolly Rhee, to whom he dictated some additions and changes. He did not make many changes, but he was convinced that his handwritten insertions would be difficult for a typist in the Regional Oral History Office in Berkeley to deal with, and he wanted to be able to stand by to answer any questions presented by the text. So, working with Joyce Preetorius, a trusted typist and friend, he set up a temporary office in a building on his Piru estate and had the entire, very lengthy manuscript typed onto a word-processor.

The transcript was then printed out in the Oral History Office and proofread and indexed. James R. K. Kantor, retired University Archivist, gave it a close reading, and so did I. In addition, Karl Kortum, who had been honored with the task of writing an introduction to the entire memoir, became by default and by instinct another proofreader and made helpful corrections. Also of great importance was the selection of photographs that Mr. Kortum made available. Several fine scenes that include him and Scott Newhall are his work, or his daughter Sarah's.

Scott Newhall knew that Karl Kortum would be the right person to write the introduction to the memoir. He gave Mr. Kortum the kind of opportunity that seldom comes to a friend--that of standing back and analyzing what makes the person unique, effective as a citizen, endearing as a companion. I won't sum up Mr. Kortum's splendid introduction, because it in some ways sums up the oral history, but I do want to thank him. It was hard work, carefully done.

When Mr. Kortum sent along, by way of illustration, an album from a musical night at the Newhall's house in Berkeley, it became rather painfully evident that not enough attention had been paid to the importance of music for Scott Newhall. Scott agreed; he was amazed that he hadn't voiced his love of music, of jazz, insistently throughout the text. And so we did an interview on music April 25, 1990, to which he appended notes written two days later as he rode back home on the train from San Francisco south. That interview is in the appendices.

In thanking people I want to put Ruth and Scott Newhall first. They could not possibly have been more helpful, or more pleasant to know. And then it was Dolly Rhee who, in the language of acknowledgments, "made the right things happen at all the critical times." She always returned calls, and helped in every way she was asked to help. Tony Newhall did too.

Scott Newhall's connections with the University of California were sufficiently invigorated by this oral history undertaking--and by conversations with Ben Bagdikian--to prompt him to make the Manuscript Division of The Bancroft Library the repository for his papers relating to the San Francisco Chronicle. The Newhall correspondence and papers dealing with three of California's most interesting decades, the second world war years through the sixties, will be an excellent resource for historians. Journalists and scholars, readers of this oral history, may wish to continue their research in The Bancroft Library. The Regional Oral History Office is a division of The Bancroft Library, the University of California at Berkeley's library of California history.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer/Editor

June 5, 1990
Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name SCOTT NEWHALL

Date of birth Jan. 21, 1914 Birthplace San Francisco, Calif

Father's full name Almér Mayo Newhall

Occupation Import-export Birthplace San Francisco

Mother's full name Anna Nicholson Scott

Occupation housewife - hostess Birthplace San Francisco

Your spouse Ruth Waldo

Your children XX Newhall (nee Nicholas Newhall)
Jonathan Newhall Anthony Newhall

Where did you grow up? San Rafael, San Francisco, Berkeley

Present community Piru (Ventura Co.) + San Francisco

Education Through Junior year at U.C.

Occupation(s) Editor - Publisher (more or less & emeritus)
(Newspaper) The Signal (newspaper) Valencia, Ca.

Areas of expertise Journalism - Machine Shop

Other interests or activities Family ranching company
Travel coinage, automotive competition
and restoration, landscape gardening

Organizations in which you are active
National Maritime Museum Association

I FAMILY HISTORY

[Interview 1: March 22, 1988]

San Rafael, Marin County

Riess: About your early memories: Did you know your grandparents?

Newhall: No, oddly enough, I never had grandparents whom I knew. The survivor was my grandfather, Edwin Newhall, who was buried the day my younger brother was born. I was about two years old when he died.

I had a step-grandmother who survived and was very charming. My grandfather had gone east to school, I suppose to Yale, and had married Fanny Hall, a young lady from one of those academies for young ladies in New England. She died in childbirth when my father was born. So my grandfather married her best friend, and schoolmate, who was Virginia Whiting Newhall, who came from Martha's Vineyard, the island off of Cape Cod there. She functioned as a sort of distant and awe-inspiring grandmother, but her husband, my grandfather, had died by the time I was active in the family scene.

Virginia Whiting was one of those New Englanders who came out here as a young woman, where she married my grandfather, but home to her was always Martha's Vineyard, and every summer she went back home to Martha's Vineyard. Her children and grandchildren still go home to Martha's Vineyard every year in the summertime. I once went "home" with them, and my brother and I began fighting and kicked over one of these breakfront glass cabinets full of Indian artifacts. I was never invited back again, at least with any enthusiasm.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page

Riess: Martha's Vineyard is beautiful.

Newhall: West Tisbury was the town that they lived in. We used to go out to Edgartown, I guess it was, or Vineyard Haven, one or the other seaport, when we went up there. And once we went sailing in a catboat around the Sound. This was my first taste of the Atlantic Ocean.

Riess: Living in San Rafael was a bit like living on an island too, wasn't it?

Newhall: Very much so. Marin County was very different then than it is now, socially or culturally. Not only was Marin a cultural island, but it supported an entirely different life than exists today in Marin County or anywhere in California. California was a western island in itself.

Marin County had been settled by Portuguese farmers, and then there was overlaid on that a Scotch, Presbyterian sort of feudal peerage. A lot of what I am suggesting were the Marin County "nobility" came from San Francisco and went north across the Golden Gate looking for a country enclave. They would commute then. The Northwestern Pacific Railroad had train service between Sausalito and Tiburon, through San Rafael, and north to Eureka. The ferry boats came across the bay from the Ferry Building to Sausalito.

It was a life that I guess is not going to be lived anymore in the United States of America. The motor cars were just coming in. There were these large estates in Marin County. This was an earlier, basically reclusive society, similar to the society that grew up down the Peninsula in Burlingame, San Mateo, Woodside, Atherton, and so on. As I say, it was basically a Scotch-Presbyterian and Episcopalian community. One's friends went to the Presbyterian church in San Rafael or to the Episcopal churches. There was a kind of communal social life. Captain Dollar of the Dollar family, and the Boyds, and the Fosters, the Johnsons, the Babcocks, the Abbotts and Andersons, and such were all San Francisco families. They moved over to Marin County.

The motor cars and the auto ferries were coming in, but we still as children had our horses. We rode all over Marin County on our horses and went out and played Indians and cowboys and so on up in the hills.

It was a wonderful life for a child because it was very comfortable. It wasn't, in a sense, as gloriously social as perhaps some of the English country estates, or perhaps Newport or something in the East, but there were numerous comfortable homes with large staffs in Marin. They had their own round of parties for the kids, the birthday parties. Of course, this culture was started before

the First World War and grew up during Prohibition. There was a certain amount of drinking, which we can get into later, if we need to. It was a very privileged group. And, of course, it all ended in 1929 or '30.

Riess: Why did the families move out there? Did they go out first for a summer home?

Newhall: I suppose so because our family--or the different members of the family--all had homes here in San Francisco. This was certainly the case in my grandfather's generation and my great-grandfather's. But in my father's generation then they moved out to Marin or elsewhere --some of my uncles and great-uncles went down to Burlingame, too. It obviously was just a comfortable routine.

My father would get up in the morning, catch the 7:45 train and go to Sausalito, get on the "Ukiah," "Eureka," or the "Sausalito," one of the ferryboats, cross the bay to San Francisco and work, and then catch the 5:15 or 5:45 ferry coming back across the bay in the evening. The commute then would have taken about an hour and a quarter. Now today, in 1988, I guess, on a bad day it can still take an hour or more through the heavy traffic.

There were no bridges then, and we were all brought up to cross the bay by ferry and land at the Ferry Building. The memories of crossing the bay with the seagulls flying and the fog and waves splashing around are still exciting. You could buy a bag of popcorn and then throw the popcorn to the seagulls. Those were memorable times, and it was a wonderful life. I could actually go on about this nostalgic life by the hour.

William Anderson Scott, Presbyterian Divine

Riess: When you say, "one was Presbyterian," I take it you were one of the "ones."

Newhall: That's right. My great-grandfather on my mother's side--his name was William Anderson Scott--he was a Presbyterian divine, or clergyman. He had been Andrew Jackson's pastor at his Hermitage Estate or whatever it was called, in Louisiana, Tennessee, back there somewhere. He came out here with a lot of children. I think he had nine. He had, as I understand it, a nanny for each one of the children, but in those days they were called slaves. This was before the Civil War.

Riess: They were black?

Newhall: They were blacks. We Americans didn't go in too much for Arabian or

Circassian slaves or anything like that. This was before the Civil War.

Riess: [laughs] I never called a slave a nanny.

Newhall: I was being a little bit, I'm sorry, ironical about it. What I was going to say was that each one had a slave nursemaid, if that's what you want to call it. Not we, I mean my mother's family.

My great-grandfather on my father's side, Henry Mayo Newhall, was not what I could describe as a devoutly religious man, but he thought "religion" was good for the people, and so he put my great-grandfather on my mother's side, Dr. Scott, up in business, and they established St. John's Presbyterian Church out on Lake Street. I believe Dr. Scott was established in a downtown San Francisco Presbyterian church earlier.

As the Civil War came along, Dr. Scott, who was a southerner, became a person of ill-fame because of his slave-holding and confederate sympathies. The people of San Francisco, numbering many northern sympathizers, were going to lynch him. My great-grandmother Newhall, Mrs. Henry Mayo Newhall, called for Dr. Scott in her carriage and hid him under a blanket. They spirited him out of town so he did not suffer hanging by the neck!

Dr. Scott came back after the war and they founded the San Francisco Theological Seminary, which is a group of old Gothic or Romanesque buildings over in San Anselmo, up on the hill above the town. My mother always felt duty-bound to observe, at least, the rituals and related social ceremonies of the Presbyterian church.

Most of the people we knew were elders or they were members of the congregation of the Presbyterian church there. I, of course, was put through Sunday school, and my mother finally prevailed upon me--I was beginning to rebel, this was in the middle twenties--to join the church.

I said, well, anything that she wanted, of course, I would be happy to do because I had the nicest mother and the nicest father, I think, any human being could have. I mean that very seriously. I have never known nicer people in my life. I joined the church and made whatever promises were required by Almighty God. But, oddly enough, that was the last time I ever went. I never went back again. I felt that I had done my filial duty and was, I suppose, a member then in good standing of the Marin County branch of the Presbyterian community.

All fooling aside, I must confess the Calvinist, or whatever they are, the Knoxian doctrines of Presbyterianism have stuck with me all my life, and they have always been, whether I liked it or not, a very strong influence in my view of many of the behavior

patterns of my fellow man. I know much of my life has been judged by me as to how well I measured up to the social requirements of the church.

I am not a church-going person. I went to Catholic church whenever I was abroad, until they gave up the Latin mass, and then I dropped out of that, too, because I used to enjoy again the rituals and proper Latin of the Catholic church. To me, a wonderful thing about the old Roman Catholic establishment was the fact that no matter what country you were in--America, Andalusia, Austria, or the great throbbing heart of Africa--no matter what language you spoke, no matter what color, creed, or anything else you professed, you could always find in the Catholic church, in the song and dance of mass, the same pattern of life going on anywhere in the world. I always enjoyed the continuity of it all.

Riess: What were the Calvinist doctrines that ruled your life?

Newhall: Well, let me put it this way: My mother and father were very active in getting ministers or pastors or people to teach. Remsen Bird--I was mentioning him earlier--was a young Presbyterian minister, a student who came out here, and my mother and father sort of took him in tow. He taught in the seminary across the bay in San Anselmo for awhile, but they put him down as president of Occidental College, which was a Presbyterian college in Eagle Rock, actually, down in Los Angeles.

Our Marin County Presbyterian world was a vaguely reformed or liberal ecclesiastical environment. So we didn't really believe too deeply in brimstone and fire. I never did think I was particularly going to roast or be sauteed, you know, in hell somehow.

One was impressed with the fact that if you measured up to some of the rather more stringent precepts of the King James version of the Bible that you would be well considered in your community. You are not to lie; you are not to steal; you are not to fornicate; you aren't supposed to fool around with your neighbor's wife or his livestock or anything like that.

We all became sinners if we failed to live up perfectly to those particular doctrines. As we backslid, or fell out of grace, one would have certain spiritual problems. We didn't have the Catholic "confessional box" in which to expiate our sins, and have everything straightened out for us. We had to struggle with it ourselves.

Riess: The guilt.

Newhall: That's right, exactly. You put the whole thing into one word for me. But guilt never bothered me too much. I figured everyone else was just as guilty or perhaps a little guiltier than I was.

"The Structured Society"

Riess: When you talk about "one," I think that's really neat. You were just like the rest of the boys. It was a homogeneous group.

Newhall: It was. Well, here in America we are not presumed to tolerate an aristocracy, but during those earlier days in Marin the land was rich and the world was kind. We were spoiled by an abundance. I don't know, you just were one of the group, there was just no question about it. This was a very structured society there. As I said, Marin County was enveloped by an overlay of San Franciscans, mostly Protestants.

For example, the deYoung family came over to Marin. They were Catholics. They had a hell of a time. They were rejected by many of Marin County's social matrons. This is Mike deYoung and his family. They are very nice people. We'll talk about them, I'm sure, later on. In Marin County, for a while, Jews were in ill-favor; blacks were in ill-favor; Irish were in ill-favor. Well, at that time the newspaper people, the deYoungs, were Catholic so they were in not accorded a position.

Mike built this very handsome home over there, a magnificent Victorian estate, but he couldn't make it with the parties and society. It was too bad because he was looking for respectability. (We're all looking for respectability.) He finally gave up. So he got a couple of chimpanzees and put them in the coach box of his carriage. Then he had his coach driven around town for awhile with the chimps sitting up in back. Then he left town, went back to San Francisco and down to Burlingame and gave his Marin County home to the Catholic Dominican Convent over in Marin. I guess he struck one last, great blow for Catholicism. I mention that simply because I think that was a slice of life then.

Riess: The chimps were the big thumbing of the nose?

Newhall: I guess so. He just did it as a gesture. That was before my time, but I have always admired him for it, believe me.

My mother and father and many of the people there, as I said, were entirely gracious. They wouldn't be rude to anyone. My father later became a president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and was rather active in San Francisco business affairs, and vaguely political affairs. We entertained people from all over the world who came through San Francisco when foreign visitors needed a whiff of local hospitality.

Riess: That was because of the business connection?

Newhall: Part of it, yes, but my mother loved people. She always had a whole

flock. She'd go around the county with a whole bunch of Presbyterian missionary students or clergymen or something, like a tail on a kite, go out to the golf club--I used to play golf with them all the time as I got a little older. It was a gay, country club kind of life and childhood. We would play tennis all day, or golf. We had parties; we danced.

Alcohol did not become a major source of social life, because of Prohibition, until when we got to be fourteen, fifteen or sixteen. Then, of course, most of us started drinking because, I suppose, that was the way to rebel. There was a lot of drinking in the middle and late nineteen-twenties, a lot of it.

Riess: What about the girls? You are from a family of boys, and you are describing the kind of bliss of being a boy in a powerful society. Do you think it was the same for girls?

Newhall: There was a difference then between girls and boys, in addition to the obvious anatomical differences. Girls were sugar and spice and everything nice, sort of. They did live in a female psychological environment. But I thought there was never anything as beautiful or as exciting or as desirable as a girl, so I'm not going to be a very good reporter on that subject. I'm not one to go out camping with the boys. If you want to go camping with the girls, fine, but not with the boys. There are other things to do.

I don't know what to say about it except that they were an immensely important part of our lives as young men. We would go to the assemblies in San Francisco, then we'd have them over for house parties in Marin.

Bolinas

Newhall: We had quite a large beach house in Bolinas, and Bolinas was something. Bolinas was just picked up right out of, I don't know what, Cornwall or Inverness or somewhere, and just plopped down on the California coast, just north of the Golden Gate.

Bolinas was Irish--Protestant, or Scotch--a little seaside summertime enclave. My first memories of life, almost, are going to Bolinas as a very small child when my brother or I had the whooping cough. Either they sent me over there so I wouldn't get it, or so I wouldn't give it to somebody else. I forget which.

Let's see. The families: the Gilfillins, the Fernettas, the Pages, and so on. My father bought quite a nice house, and we lived right down on the beach at the end of the road. Our friends all came and spent all summertime with us--my parents' friends, my

friends, my brothers' friends. One summer, as I got to be a little older, I said to my mother, "Look, I'll be the quartermaster here. I'll supply the food and watch the cooks, and so on and so forth, and take care of the cuisine and the catering."

She said, "Well, we have an average of twenty-seven people living here this summer." They just were everywhere. We had quite a few guest rooms and guest houses and things.

It was an incredibly privileged life in terms of the freedom that one had. The whole family would go to Bolinas. We had nurses and gardeners and cooks and grooms and everyone else who would come along. Then for three months we could either go barefoot, or ride. We'd ride our horses all over. Later we had cars to go out snipe hunting or whatever was doing up on the mesa.

There were always girls during those Bolinas summers. They were family and friends and guests. They would come over from San Francisco. Or visit from Los Angeles or Cleveland or Washington, D.C., New York, or Berlin or South America. Or in one case, we were blessed with a White Russian family with two beautiful daughters still on the run from the Bolsheviks.

We'd live in our bathing suits and we had row-boats, sailboats, speed boats, and canoes and stuff in the lagoon. Unbelievable perhaps, yet this was all very simple. We were a very simple, relaxed, informal family. My uncles and great-uncles and so on would come by for a few days. They were all very stylish. Some of them were deaf or very fat or suffering from vastly elevated blood pressure.

In our regular San Rafael home there were lots of people around to make life comfortable. Up in the attic room there were always one or two or three of our old servants who were either dying or otherwise retired. It was all a big family.

I cannot tell you what memorable parents I had. They were so gracious, even to their own children. After I went off to school, and responded to the wild call of the Gordon's Dry Gin flask, people would look at me and shake their heads and snap, "How could Almer and Anna have ever sired a person as awful as you are?" That's a fact. That was the guilt. I had to live up to my parents, they were perfect. They never quarrelled.

My father was so pleasant. In Bolinas every Fourth of July for two or three days they'd build this huge bonfire on the beach, and my father would always bring over from San Francisco literally truckloads of fire crackers, Roman candles, triangles, bombs and such wonderful stuff. Every kid in Bolinas would come down to my father's ammunition dump on the beach and help himself to anything he wanted. We'd all spend the Fourth of July blowing up the beach

at Bolinas. It was a wonderful life. The beach was full of walking-wounded kids. I almost blew my right hand off one Fourth of July.

Riess: What happened to that house? Is it still there?

Newhall: Well, the house is still there. In 1929 we went broke, our family, just absolutely totally broke. We had to sell the San Rafael home, the Bolinas house. We moved into the third floor garret of my step-grandmother's home.

Riess: Where in Bolinas is the house?

Newhall: You come into Bolinas heading more or less south, I guess, along the lagoon. You come down to the crossroads at the old Community Church. One road will go around to the left to the channel by the lagoon. But if you turn to the right, instead, you go out to the ocean. It was the last house on the right down at the ocean. It was right on the beach there. The beach is all gone now. There was a beautiful beach there. The clam patch, you'd go out and dig for clams and go get mussels on the reef--do anything, ride, boat, eat picnic lunches or ride the waves on surfboards.

Riess: Were you being taught, as often children of wealthy parents are, a sort of noblesse oblige? Were you supposed to be good to other less fortunate children?

Newhall: Totally. Totally. I believed it, and I still do. This is a very sensitive thing to get into. I don't mean that I would be patronizing to anyone. We were just the same as anybody else. Our friends came from almost anywhere. I know that the chauffeur's son was my closest friend for a year or two or three. Actually he was the son of somebody else's chauffeur.

Mother, Anna, and Brothers, Almer and Hall

Newhall: My mother had been very, very poor, very poor. Her father had taken to the bottle very likely because he couldn't stand the Presbyterian pressure or something. She had been very poor and she had got a job at Miss Murison's School for Young Ladies here in San Francisco and met my father, who was probably one of the bachelor catches of the generation. I guess my mother would have been described as the very respectable or genteel poor of San Francisco. They were married and soon moved to San Rafael.

She had been brought up in great part by her aunt, Louisiana Scott, who was married to Arthur Foster. Uncle Arthur Foster was an Irish boy who had come over and got very rich and finally got

control of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, which ran from Tiburon north through the Redwood country to Eureka.

The Fosters really had a magnificent estate--it's all gone now --in San Rafael. It was called Fair Hills. It was full of peacocks and stables and carriages and everything you might want. The stables were built in concentric circles of boxstalls. Above it in the hay loft was a large enough floor so that all of our San Rafael and San Francisco friends and group of guests could, on rainy days in the winter, go roller skating up there. Lord, we could play snap the whip! It was quite large.

The Fosters brought up, in great part, my mother. In a sense, she had always been the poor relation in the household, although they gave her everything their own children had. (They had nine sons and daughters in her generation.) She never forgot that, and so she devoted her life, really--of course I'm very prejudiced, I suppose--to trying to help other people. She suffered a stroke which incapacitated her when she was in her fifties, and so her left side was practically useless.

By this time, as I mentioned, our family fortunes collapsed with the great '29 crash, but we had enough here and there to eat with. My mother came to live at the Berkeley Women's City Club before Pearl Harbor. She taught herself to operate a braille typewriter, and the rest of her life, for about fifteen years, she spent transcribing into braille the doctoral dissertations of blind students at UC.

I admired her so much for doing that. She'd sit there all day long. I don't know if you have ever run a braille typewriter. She always had to have, I suppose, dependents to whom she felt she was contributing something. She had, I'm sure, that feeling. She was always so nice to me. As I say, I have my moments of guilt. Here I was, this naughty little boy, even when I was larger.

Riess: You were the second of three sons. What are the names of the others? What kind of little boys were they?

Newhall: Well, my older brother was Almer Mayo Newhall, Jr. My younger brother was Hall Mearns Newhall. Hall was named for his grandmother, Fanny Hall Newhall. My mother's mother was a Mearns.

In the case of brother Almer, I had the innate respect for him that I guess most boys do for their older brothers; I always sort of glorified him, idealized him, or idolized him. Almer was a different personality, different from Hall and me. He didn't take to horses and girls that much--not necessarily in that order.

He was thrown off his horse, Skylark, and she kicked him when he was down. She did that to me a few times. She was a nasty, ill-

tempered mare. He came home crying one night, "Oh, I don't want that horse. I'll never ride a horse again." (And he didn't.) I heard and I went running to my mother and said, "Can I have Skylark?" And that's how I got my black and white pinto pony, Skylark. Almer from that time on went in for motor cars.

I loved my horse Skylark. We had a fine love affair. She was an absolute, uncontaminated bitch. As I say, she'd throw you off. She was difficult. If she got you on the ground, you had to roll out of the way fast because she'd start kicking.

My brother, Almer, became very interested in motorcars. He was always building cars. He finally built an airplane that crashed on its first fight and rather cut up the young man who was flying it. The pilot had never flown before either. Almer went to engineering school and aeronautic mechanical classes at the Boeing aircraft facility over at the Oakland airport. Then he went, oh, here and there to one or another of the engineering schools. He ended up at MIT in Boston. He was going to join the faculty there but he gave it up because he couldn't stand the weather in Massachusetts. It is very difficult for a California person to go east and settle comfortably in the Siberian steppes of the East Coast. You may know that. It's rough.

Almer worked as an engineer all during World War II. I guess he had a good Presbyterian sort of repressive conscience because he couldn't stand some aspects of common social misbehavior. He was working for a rather elaborate and sophisticated radar tube engineering manufacturing firm down the peninsula, Eitel-McCullough, which was a World War II success story and precursor of the Silicon Valley industrial wonder electronic firms of the 1980s.

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Newhall: Unfortunately, the ultra-human qualities of Almer's co-workers bothered him. The young men around the plant apparently were in the habit of spending their lunch hours or coffee breaks playing "post office" in the photo dark rooms with the young ladies--secretaries I suppose they were then, I don't think there were many female engineers at the moment--and my brother didn't approve of it. The day the Japanese surrendered he went in and told the president, "I quit. I can't stand this. This is not the kind of place I want to work in."

I should say when he was very young Almer had trouble with his ears. He had a double mastoid situation. He was partially deaf all his life and so at times he preferred to live in his own environment. He was a peace-loving man, much like my father. He couldn't stand to see anyone hurt or hungry or hated. He kept retreating. He lived up in Cloverdale and then Sonoma for awhile. In the sixties he came down with cancer, and he died very young,

fifty-one or fifty-two.

My younger brother died when he was about fifty. My father died at about fifty-five. I think my grandfather died at about that age. I have often wondered why I am still here and able to indulge myself in a conversation of this nature. But here I am.

Riess: You definitely are still here! Even your great-grandfather, Henry Mayo, died young [1825-1882].

Newhall: My mother lived to be in her sixties, anyway.

Riess: Your great-grandfather got on with living very early. He didn't finish high school.

Newhall: All of us have tended to get on about things. I was frequently under the impression that there wasn't too much time to waste.

Riess: It sounds like you and your older brother were really very different. Did you model your life on him in any way?

Newhall: No. I always felt my brother Almer was a genius. He was very brilliant in his field. We were going to build a race car to run in the Indianapolis 500. I was to drive it; he was going to build it. We were going to call it the Newhall Brothers' Special. But we never got around to doing it, unfortunately. After he died I went back to Indianapolis almost every year for the race, I suppose to do homage to him. I have always enjoyed motor cars myself and racing and whatnot.

Mother's Free Spirit, and Spiritualism

Riess: I asked you earlier about your parents. They cared about religion. Did they care about politics?

Newhall: They cared about the observance of religion; about politics, no. I would say, generally speaking, everyone whom one knew was a Republican. The result was that my mother would call herself a Socialist half the time. I was a Republican then, at least I professed such a faith. I am still registered as a Republican, although it is still a hopeless political convocation.

Riess: Your mother would call herself a Socialist?

Newhall: Oh, she thought Norman Thomas was just grand. Look, my mother was a free spirit in her way.

Riess: I hadn't gathered that. That's great.

Newhall: Oh, totally. I have seen her in action. She was absolutely a glorious hostess. She could laugh and charm everybody. I've never known anybody who didn't love her. She could talk and laugh her way out of anything. If some Republican honcho would come over and start spouting the wit and wisdom of Warren G. Harding, she would laugh and tickle him under the chin. She was totally apolitical that way.

My father I never heard express a political thought in his life, except, I'm sure, if anybody had asked him he'd say, "I'm a Republican."

Riess: What about suffrage? Was that something your mother was interested in?

Newhall: She had a very great respect for the female sex. There were no barriers, to her. She wasn't out there parading around with a placard at all, but if there had been any confrontation and she had to take a choice it would have been on the side of the suffragette. She was totally independent in thought.

For whatever it's worth, when the DAR boycotted a Marian Anderson concert--it was in Philadelphia I think--because the great singer was a "negro," my mother resigned from the DAR.

I have never mentioned what I am about to say before. I think it's proper only to say that at one period in my mother's life, when we were still going to Bolinas, she became very much involved with what was then called spiritualism. She had some psychic, or extrasensory, experiences with some of her friends, some quite well-placed friends. They would attend meetings with people involved in seances or other remarkable extraterrestrial phenomena. She had some experiences as a medium. In a sense it didn't ever go anywhere, but that was a tremendously important facet of her life. I'm not fit to get off and declaim on the field of hysteria or anything like that, but she was very much involved.

The Stewart Edward Whites were people who lived down in Burlingame. He was the author of some very successful novels. The Whites were very social. He was a preeminent big game hunter, explorer, and naturalist and so forth. They were involved in spiritualism. (I haven't thought about this for a long time.)

My mother left a trunk full of documents, theoretically transmitted to her either through her own automatic writing, or something historical, which she gave to Lynn Townsend White--who incidentally was not related to the Stewart Edward Whites. Lynn White was the son of a Presbyterian clergyman. He became the president of Mills College and a very renowned scholar of medieval literature. I'm just mentioning that in passing; spiritualism was

part of my mother's makeup.

Riess: When was this?

Newhall: It was in the twenties. She felt she had to give it up because physically, I think, she felt it was draining her energy. I cannot in any way tell you anymore than just superficially. I was aware of this and observed it to a certain extent. It was something that people didn't talk about. Psychic phenomena were not a subject for serious discussion in the supposedly glittering levels of polite society in the 1920s and '30s.

Riess: Yes. It sounds like one had to be outwardly very normal in that society.

Newhall: This spiritualism seemed to be quite normal to me. What the devil! If my mother said there was something to it, it was good enough for me. I didn't argue one way or another.

Guests to Sunday Lunch

Riess: Did you all dine together as a family?

Newhall: Yes. After we were about eight years old, more or less, we would all eat together normally. Otherwise, we had a separate dining room for the children. As youngsters we would eat there. And be served ahead of time. On Sundays, even quite young, we could come to the dinner table or the luncheon table.

The Sunday lunch I recall as a charming occasion. I loved it because we had all these brilliant, garish, wonderful, strange people who would come to dine with us. And they were strange!

For example, my favorite guest of all time was a Chinese actor, very famous, Mr. Mei Lan Fan. Chinese actors then played the part of the female, and he played the female part. And there always seemed to be a piano teacher at Sunday lunch. And there were always two or three Korean missionaries, Presbyterian missionary students, or a couple of clergymen or a bishop would come. At Sunday lunch we'd play host to about ten or twelve, maybe a few more guests sometimes.

I will tell you a story--it has always stuck with me. It was one Sunday lunch. We'd gone to church, and came home. On the back porch the Chinese cook was there making ice cream for everybody. (We always had a Chinese cook, that is until my mother hired a Filipino cook because he had been on the Filipino Davis Cup team and was going to teach me tennis.)

We'd come driving up from church and I would ask, "Who is coming to lunch today?" I just loved it. The lunches and the guests were glorious and bizarre. I had to learn my manners there. There was usually a visiting daughter or son from some family far away. My father had business negotiations, investments and so on in the Hawaiian Islands and in London, Shanghai or Hong Kong. These people would come to see us and sometimes with great good luck, a beautiful daughter would come through, too. That was great.

But I remember this time some poor clergyman, a wandering hedge priest of some denomination--we were all eating away at a well-spread table when from under him, just like an accordion, his chair collapsed. And he lay flat on his back with a mouth full of salad. I began to laugh because I had no manners! Every glued joint on the chair had come apart. This was the funniest damn thing, and I couldn't understand why my mother was telling me, "Don't do that. Stop laughing. It's awful." This is where, I guess, one learned, as I say, to a certain extent, how to behave.

My mother's brother--I hope I'm not really wandering too much, but I wanted to get this down--his name was Will, William Anderson Scott III, or junior. I mentioned that my mother's family had been quite poor. Well, Uncle Will had taken to the bottle also, and he just pulled out and disappeared. He went into a retreat from the family. After some years he finally showed up again. I don't think he was drinking any more, and he had married a Swedish woman who was a good soul. She loved me, and I loved her. We had a very close relationship. This was Aunt Mildred, and she was absolutely a Swedish mama, of sorts, not from the highest levels of Swedish society, I can assure you.

Getting back to Sunday lunch, Aunt Mildred and Uncle Will would come over from San Francisco about once a month or so, and sit down to Sunday lunch. Aunt Mildred was one to speak her mind, and I didn't realize it then, but she usually fortified herself for this "high-toned" company by taking a quick nip from the sherry decanter. I mentioned earlier that we had this great Chinese actor as a guest. He was the John Barrymore of the Peking theater, or Shanghai, and he didn't speak any English--fortunately. So, Mr. Mei just sat there, and he had an interpreter from the Chinese consulate sitting next to him. Aunt Mildred was there and everybody was talking to Mr. Mei. My father said, "Now be sure and call him Mr. Mei, don't call him Mr. Lan or Mr. Fan."

All of a sudden, in one of these silences, Aunt Mildred piped up--and there must have been at least ten of us at the table that time because it was a pretty busy table--she said, "You know, Anna, my father always taught me that you can't trust a Jap. You can trust a Chink, but you can't trust a Jap." My God! If you can imagine what happened after that! I began to laugh because I didn't

know it was anything too bad.

In any case I don't think the Chinese interpreter could have made any sense with a translation of Aunt Mildred's casual commentary.

After lunch I asked my mother, "Well, what was wrong?" She explained it to me. I have never had to have it explained to me again. You asked me a question about what we were told about interracial behavior and public behavior. Race, color, creed, ethnic derivation and whatever, it made no difference as far as my mother was concerned. By God, you were going to obey that unwritten law. Now, one can say that this may be, again, noblesse oblige. I learned my lesson there, and I believed it. I still do, but I find good manners difficult sometimes.

From Riches to Bankruptcy

Riess: Did your father like what he did? What did he do?

Newhall: I don't know if he liked it. Yes, I could tell you a couple of little stories about that. My father was an importer and exporter, what they used to call a "capitalist," which term is currently obsolete. My great-grandfather had come out to San Francisco and had been an auctioneer, a rancher, and his sons incorporated the Newhall Land and Farming Company. Then my father and a great-uncle of mine were partners in something called H.M. Newhall and Company, which was an importing-exporting firm. My father just assumed that was going to be his life, but he had always wanted to be an entrepreneur.

They got really quite rich. They did very well during World War I. But from then on everything was downhill, so the brothers began spending their capital.

My father wanted to do well, and so he would take an occasional plunge; in fact, quite often. One of those occasions he decided to go into the quicksilver mining business in Lake County.

My mother also took an interest in bettering the condition of our fellow citizens who happened to be in prison. She said, "Now, Almer, if you are going to go into the mining business, if you are going to have a smelter up there, please will you see if you can't make arrangements to take on either parolees, or people who are let out of prison in order to work under supervision?" "Certainly, Anna darling." He never quarreled.

I used to go up with him to those quicksilver mines, and

everything went fine until we arrived one day and the superintendent of the mine was barricaded in one house; the parolees, or whoever they were, the jailbirds, were barricaded in the other; and the prisoners had the guns and ammunition. There was this occasional sporadic fighting. Well, my father somehow was able to get them to stop shooting.

What had happened was that some of the prison gang had run off with the quicksilver, but some of them were still there, and they were fighting it out. He persuaded--I never knew the upshot of it all--them to stop fighting, and it ended up that he managed to spirit his superintendent across the border into Mexico at night. I really don't know what it was all about, but it was one of those horrible financial disasters that beset my father's entrepreneurial enterprise.

Another time--$25,000 was quite a lot of money at that time--he went over to Maui in the Hawaiian Islands and bought, on the basis of a conversation with a friend or advisor of his, a pineapple plantation, because pineapples were going to be very big and Jim Dole was starting to flood the world with pineapples. He bought this wonderful plantation on Maui. The only trouble was, if you know the Islands at all, it rains on one side and it doesn't rain on the other side. He bought his on the desert side. Our pineapple crop never did really materialize, and he lost that.

The third one--he got into a patent can-opener business, but unfortunately the steel in the can openers was softer than the tin cans themselves. But all the time the H.M. Newhall import-export business kept on rolling.

He liked the sea, as many of my family have, and there was this old sailing ship down near Los Angeles that was for charter because the steam and the power vessels had replaced sails. This was in the middle twenties by this time, and my father thought, well, wind power was cheaper than steampower, and so he chartered this ship. He chartered it because I think he had bought a new movie camera, one of those early sixteen-millimeter cameras, and he wanted pictures of himself on board sailing up the coast from Los Angeles to San Francisco. But the trip took so long. He had to have them put into Monterey, and he got off there.

Well, they finally loaded the ship here in San Francisco and started with a cargo of wood or lumber for Tahiti, or somewhere in the South Seas. They got about three days out, and the sheriff showed up and said, "Look, the lady you chartered this ship from doesn't own it." It was a hell of a mess. The Coast Guard finally picked them up in the Islands, brought the ship back. That was the end of that.

Those are some of the things he did. He did those because of

the pure enjoyment of it, and he was an importer and an exporter and quite successful, actually--it was quite a noted firm--for the rest of his life until he died in 1933. He lost his money, and the firm was sort of bankrupt at the time.

They had their office in the Newhall Building down at California and Battery Streets, nice old kind of Georgian brick building. My father and uncles, great-uncles, were all members of the Pacific Union Club, so every noon they would walk out of the Newhall Building on California Street, climb on the California Street cable car and go up the hill to lunch at the Pacific Union club and then come down.

They were all very, very, heavy men and they were known in the financial district as "Guts," "Guts," and "Guts." They said that the cable car went up the hill at about a thirty degree angle whenever they got on. The reason I say that they were heavy was that my father was shorter than I, and he weighed about 275 pounds. My grandfather was a little taller; he weighed 325 pounds. My Uncle George weighed in at about 300 pounds. There was a lot of weight going up California Street on the side of that cable car.

Riess: Up to a certain point your family had a kind of Midas touch.

Newhall: They did very well importing or exporting during the war. My great-grandfather had been very successful--Henry Mayo Newhall--he started the first railroad here in San Jose and was on a lot of boards of directors. Then he got into ranching. I don't know exactly how he made it all. He made, apparently, quite a lot of money. His progeny were able to disperse it pretty well, too. Fortunately, the land was not liquid. They were not able to sell all of it, or I guess that today we all would be darning socks or something.

II SCOTT NEWHALL: FLAMING YOUTH

Reading and Leisure Time

Riess: Did your family read a newspaper regularly?

Newhall: The Chronicle. They didn't read the Examiner because--you know, the feeling about the papers was really very high in those days. Hearst's was the working man's newspaper and so on and so forth. One just didn't read the Examiner. I don't know anybody who read a Hearst paper. It was just a bad word. They read the Chronicle. And the Chronicle was sort of quietly dying, but if you were respectable, you read the Chronicle. If you believed in ghosts, you'd read the Examiner. I don't know.

Riess: What did you read as a kid? What were the influential books, do you think?

Newhall: I couldn't read enough. I remember children are supposed to go to sleep when they go to bed, and I always had a flashlight. It looked like a candle, with a little bulb screwed into it for the flame. So I'd get under the covers, and I'd read until I had to go to sleep. What did I read? Mostly adventure stories. It wasn't Proust. It wasn't Tacitus, or it wasn't Vasari.* Mostly adventure stories involved with pirates or sailing, and I think I read Two Years Before the Mast for the first time then.

I learned to read on books like the Rover Boys and Tom Swift and the Motor Boys. They were the serial books about high adventure in Mexico or the outback somewhere. I read every one. I loved to read, but I had to be amused. I didn't like to study. I read until one of the maids or the governess would come in late at night and

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*Referring to interviewer having noticed that Newhall is now reading Tacitus and Vasari.

say, "Look, knock this off."

Riess: Do you think that was the only time that you really would have had to yourself, and the rest of your life was organized around activities? Can you picture yourself by yourself much?

Newhall: No, I loved people. Boy, we always wanted to do something. We had so much fun. Again, I keep getting back to horses, and from horses we graduated into buck boards. They were these little four-wheeled cycle cars with either a motor wheel on the back or a motorcycle engine in it. Then into cars. I bought my first car when I was fourteen. That's when you got your license in the 1920s. You learned to drive when you were about ten.

The activities weren't all that organized. We could do anything we wanted in the summertime.

Riess: It's not that so much. I think about people who grow up on the West Coast. There is the cliche that it's a seasonless existence. One of the things about the seasons on the East Coast is that finally, ultimately, you are forced to amuse yourself, by yourself. It is the dead of winter, and you are alone. Mostly, I'm asking were there ever long periods of time that you had to yourself?

Newhall: I don't think I read much in the summertime. In the winter I guess I did most of that reading I was talking about. We were too busy in the summer. The summer is pretty long here, from about April or May to October.

Riess: It's all pleasure what you have described so far. How can you be a Calvinist and have had a life of pure pleasure?

Newhall: Well, I left the church for the flesh pots, didn't I? [laughter] Not quite. This version of Calvinism I'm just mentioning was filtered through some very liberal Presbyterian ministers. They had a youth club, Good Christian Youth, or some damn thing. There were always a couple of pretty good-looking girls around the altar rail back then. But I wasn't involved with altar rail girls at that time. Our lives were structured to a certain extent. I'm talking now about the religious and recreation efforts and so on. The superficialities of religion did not then, or now, ever play any part in my life. I learned my books of the Bible to get little gold and silver award pins, and I got all of those. I found it fascinating. I loved to read some of these Bible stories. But holy scripture never became a dominant intellectual factor in my life.

Riess: I don't mean to have brought it up three times. It's the value system.

Newhall: For whatever it's worth--the most important sense I have ever encountered in my life, in terms of its impact on me, and I cannot

quote you now what book it comes from in the New Testament, certainly is the so-called Golden Rule, whether you put it negatively or positively. "Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself." That's been totally my governing credo. Or, in negative terms: "Don't do unto others as you would not have done unto yourself."

That covers an awful lot of territory. My sons are very similar that way, and I can't tell you why. They want to be what they call "fair."

Schools

Little Gray School

Riess: What did you want to do? When did you start being conscious of being a person with an option, choices? Can you think about yourself that way?

Newhall: I didn't know. I'm sure I wanted to emulate my father.

Riess: Business would have been all right?

Newhall: It might have been inevitable. My father went to Yale. I went through school, and I was accepted by Yale. Fortunately, the Depression came along. When I was first asked the question "What do you want to do in life?" I was a junior in one of the prep schools I went to. The master asked each one of us in the class, "What is it you aim for? What do you want to do?"

I was a snotty little kid, so I said, "I want to retire." That's the way I behaved. That was my first option. Because I enjoyed life. I did. Life was such a marvelous experience, the life that I lived. Why did I want to put myself in either handcuffs or a straight-jacket when I could have the whole world as a playground? I suppose that if things hadn't worked out differently, I would have died of alcoholism by the time I was thirty. I haven't gotten into that. From the time I was fourteen, on up to twenty, I did more drinking than a great many people do in a lifetime.

Riess: Is this what accounts for your problems in school and the delinquency? Tell me about going to school.

Newhall: I started out in the Little Gray School which was on Fifth Street in San Rafael, next to an old mansion there--the Katherine Branson School for girls moved into that mansion in San Rafael in the early twenties. But I went to what was called the Little Gray School. On

the way to school the chauffeur would stop and we would pick up Caroline Roddin and Mary Katherine Zook, two of our friends' children. We would go to the Little Gray School and do our studies. Incidentally, those two girls were very, very smart, and probably beautiful. I was a perfectly good student. I never went to the Branson School as such. My younger brother did, but I was a little older than that.

Mount Tamalpais Military Academy

Newhall: From there I went to the Mount Tamalpais Military Academy in San Rafael where my father had graduated. Mount Tamalpais Military Academy was kind of a spin-off from World War I. Major Vanderbilt and Major Kirk ran the school. I loved that school. I was a very bad boy in a sense. At first, I studied pretty hard, and I always won the drill downs, which was the way you handled your rifle. And I admired the big boys. My brother Almer played the trombone in the band. I just wanted to be a big boy. I was there through the seventh grade. So that would have been fifth, sixth, seventh grades. I did pretty well.

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Newhall: The Mount Tamalpais Military Academy and all those early schools I went to, there was always a master or two who might be a little odd. They'd always say, "He was shell-shocked in the war." I never knew quite what that meant. I suppose they call it psychoneurosis now in the Second World War generations.

I admired that school. As I say, I misbehaved a good deal because generally, if I couldn't be the best, I might as well be the worst. Anything as long as they used my name. The teachers would administer corporal punishment more or less by throwing chalk or blackboard erasers at selected student targets. If some of us were cheeky or soldiering, they lobbed a few projectiles at us. I had no objection because when I was the target I deserved it.

They'd sometimes hit us with rulers. I don't know if they were supposed to or not. I learned a lot that way. It was not as bad as an English public school.

Riess: Do you mean people who are dumb should be hit?

Newhall: No. They had many kids from well-to-do families, and some of them would be sitting there on their butts doing nothing. One of the teachers might say, "Look, stupid, I'm not going to waste my time on you," and maybe crack him one. I am not talking about some student who was simply retarded. No one was hit simply on account of that.

It was when we were not living up to what we could do that they'd let us have a whiff of grape.

I was never smacked unless I deserved it. One of our military academy teachers used to come climbing over rows of desks to get some guy in the back who was being too smart or recalcitrant and he'd get him, too. No one objected to it, including the kid. [laughter]

In these sensitive days, in the 1980s, if you send some rotten little kid to school, and if a teacher dares to lay a hand on him, his parents will be down there, and they're going to start suing the school for pain and suffering and the invasion of privacy and the violation of civil rights and all this crap.

Riess: Did you wear uniforms?

Newhall: Yes. At Mount Tamalpais we certainly did.

The penalties they passed out were what they would call "marching trail." You'd have to get a rifle on your shoulder and walk around the parade ground. I ran up so many hours of trail that when I finally left school I still owed them about two hundred hours of marching. I loved it. I loved the school. I admired the seniors. They had a great baseball team.

The best day for gossip we ever had in that school was the day one of the Chinese cooks was caught making immoral advances to one of the boarding students. I was not a boarding student; I was a day student. That kept us going for weeks, talking about the assault and battery crisis in Foster Hall.

Riess: A male cook?

Newhall: Yes. These things happen. Everybody recovered from it. I don't know if they sent him back to China or shot him. I think he lost his job, and I hope so because the pancakes they made in the school at that place were so bad that you could take them and squeeze them up in your hand and use them in the handball court. This is true, literally. [laughter]

Tamalpais School for Boys

Newhall: When I left that school, I really didn't want to go. I begged my parents not to take me out of the school. They wanted to send me to the Tamalpais School for Boys. My father and a group of San Francisco "capitalists" decided they wanted an English public school.

There were two military schools in San Rafael: Mount Tamalpais Military Academy and Hitchcock Military Academy. Mount Tamalpais was where I went. My best friends were there. Hitchcock was unspeakable as far as we were concerned. Then in the late 1920s the two military academies were merged and what was originally Hitchcock became a West Coast version of an English public school.

I didn't want to go there. Tamalpais Military Academy was an all-male school where real men went. Nobody ate quiche there. [laughter] The Tamalpais School for Boys was all quiche, although they hadn't invented that then. So I went there for three years. It was right at the foot of our hillside home in San Rafael. My father had put money into it, got it organized or helped to get it started. A great many of my old friends in San Francisco went there. You make a lot of friends in school. My experience there was okay.

Riess: When you say "friends in San Francisco," do you mean that they were boarding students?

Newhall: Yes. I happened to be a day student. I was right next door and never bothered to board. A lot of guys from Burlingame, San Francisco, Hillsborough, Atherton, and out in the Sacramento Valley and San Joaquin Valley and so forth lived at the school.

Riess: That was in part the point of those schools, the beginning of an "old boy" prep school network.

Newhall: Exactly. Then everybody was going to Yale or Harvard--take your choice. That was it. I learned quite a lot at Tamalpais, but I got to playing too much golf.

I have a very good personal friend from San Rafael whose name is Harry Johnson. He had been a day student at Hitchcock, and I met him on the playing fields at Hitchcock. When I was a kid, we were up there playing some touch tackle football. He did something to my younger brother. We had a hell of a fight. He was bigger and heavier and probably faster than I. He gave me a bad beating. We have been absolutely inseparable friends ever since. He's still alive, and either one of us is afraid the other will die because it will be a grave omen for the other one's future. I don't know how we're going to work it out in the end.

Webb School

Newhall: Harry Johnson and I got to fooling around when we were at Tamalpais together. We liked to play golf. Instead of reporting for

afternoon classes or for afternoon activities, we would go out to the Marin Golf and Country Club and play golf--every day of the year. We got into a lot of trouble, and our parents, with the cooperation of the school authorities, decided that it would be better for each one of us if we went to different schools, and neither one of us stayed at Tamalpais.

I went away to the Webb School for Boys down south in Claremont in Los Angeles County. Harry went to the Dean School in Santa Barbara. I lasted a year at Webb. Do you want me to go into the school thing?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Webb was kind of a horsey school. The headmaster was Thompson Webb, Dr. Webb, a very nice man from Tennessee whose father Chauncey Webb had started the Webb School for Boys in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. This new Webb School in California was a boarding school and small, about a hundred kids, more of them from southern California than northern California.

This was 1928, just before the Depression. There were a lot of unhappy rich kids at Webb from places like Beverly Hills, Pasadena, Orange Grove, Hancock Park. It was okay. I liked all my schoolmates wherever I went, and I did all right.

Riess: Why "unhappy rich boys?" In retrospect, that's how you would identify them?

Newhall: There were problem boys there, too. I never considered myself an "unhappy rich boy." There were a lot of sons there of these strange and booming new southern California communities. A lot of new money--that's what I would describe it as now.

Riess: Are you serious when you say that if you couldn't be the best, you would just as soon be the worst?

Newhall: I think that's what I did. I would usually start out and I'd be the head of the class. I'd get straight "A's" usually. Then I'd get into too much tennis, and pretty soon it would slip. Then, as I got down into the "C's," I couldn't stand it. So then pretty soon, I was down to straight "F's." It was a pattern, I'm afraid. I did that at Mount Tamalpais. I guess I did it at Tamalpais because I preferred to play golf instead of studying. I had to repeat my sophomore year at Webb.

Lawrenceville

Newhall: My father had gone back to Yale for his twenty-fifth reunion. We came back through the canal, and made the voyage on board one of these big old liners, the old Mongolia this time. Some people from Los Angeles who were on board told my mother and father about the Webb School. That's why I went to Webb. They accepted me. Then, somehow, I guess, my report cards began to fall badly, and at the end of the year some friends visiting us at Bolinas suggested that my parents send me to Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. Some people were pushing that. Everybody was trying to help Almer and Anna decide what to do with Scott. And so I went back to New Jersey to the Lawrenceville Academy.

Riess: Prepping for Princeton?

Newhall: Right. It was all very different. The East Coast can be cold and miserable for wide-open, lazy California kids. The winter was so cold, and I behaved terribly. But Lawrenceville had thirty-five tennis courts there, and I used to love tennis, really I did.

I wired my room up--the headmaster would come around and see if everybody was asleep, and the masters switched off our room lights at night--but I wired up my room to the fire escape light in the hall outside my door, and connected the wires so that if the door opened the lights would go out. If you closed the door the lights inside would go back on. But word got around the house and the masters found out about it. I just was a non-conformist.

The headmaster was taking all these visitors through school there one day, and gee, there was the whole student body out looking at this prize fight I promoted between two of the black house boys. (It was a good school. You had house boys and cooks and waiters, that kind of thing. The staff even made your bed for you. I think it's shocking.) So then a fellow from Colorado, Amos Sudler, Jr., and I caught the southbound Interurban and went down to Philadelphia and then went on down to Maryland--we ran away from school. The headmaster let us come back.

One day when spring had just started, and the windows were open, and I could hear a saxophone being played out in the porch, we had to go to a school assembly. Mather A. Abbott was the headmaster's name. I walked in a little late for the assembly. All the guys--we were all buddies in that school--put their legs out in the aisle, and to get to my seat down the aisle I had to go over all their legs. I stood back and I said, "Make way for King Newhall." They put their legs down. I just started in.

Well, the headmaster got up and he let me have it--you can't believe! He threw me out of school--boom--right there. He said,

"You get out of here Newhall, right now. And you get the train tonight, and don't ever come back here." So that's the way I left Lawrenceville.

Riess: So he had to break your spirit?

Newhall: I don't know. He was an older guy. Dr. Abbott wasn't flexible enough. Lawrenceville wasn't ready for California yet. [laughter]

I came out and finished up that year at San Rafael High School, and then for my senior year I went back to the Webb School for Boys again. I won four block letters in sports, and that was the best thing that ever happened. I thought, "Man, I'm on the way." And then I got in on the bootlegging business. The headmaster found out about it, and I voluntarily left school in the dark of the night just two weeks before graduation. Every time it was this cycle like that. I learned a great deal.

"Old Dad" Against the School

Riess: You didn't choose the easy way.

Newhall: No, it just happened. As far as I was concerned, there was no choice. I just did it. A lot of what I am saying is twenty-twenty hindsight as to motivations. I was sixteen then.

Riess: You were very competitive?

Newhall: Very. In my way. Football, baseball, basketball, tennis, and pole vaulting. I didn't win a fifth letter because at a luncheon before the All-Valley Championship--I never went out for track, ever; I did a lot of swimming--the sports coach asked, "Anybody here know how to pole vault?" I never pole-vaulted in my life. I had once in back of the house tried a bamboo pole. I offered to carry the flag for Webb because they needed a pole vault for the team. I tied for third place in the All-Valley Championship. I thought that was pretty good. I probably went all of five or six feet. It was funny.

Riess: You really took the tennis seriously?

Newhall: I loved it. I was going to be the world's greatest tennis player. I did not succeed.

Riess: What do you think your best talents were then?

Newhall: None. I felt I could do anything I wanted to do. I was motivated to try everything. Music was a tremendous part of my life. I was a

lousy musician. I loved motors, cars, racing, tennis, golf--very physical, a lot of it.

Riess: Did you sail on the bay?

Newhall: We lived in the water, starting with Bolinas. Everybody either had a boat or a canoe or a raft or some such aquatic contraption. We lived on the water, and we had parties, and we'd go out duck shooting. It was an amphibious life. When I was very small, because my Greatuncle Arthur owned the Northwestern Pacific, we used to go on Sunday--he'd get the whole family, the Scotts and some of the Newhalls, and our other friends--we'd go out for picnics in the big bay ferry boats. He owned all these Sausalito-San Francisco ferry boats that went back and forth.

It was an enchanting, privileged life. I say it very frankly. I usually am quite embarrassed to talk about it. I don't think many other children enjoyed such a grand opportunity for simple pleasure. We did not have this big disciplinary life that a lot of the English had. We ran free.

Riess: When you were back at Lawrenceville, you really felt different as a Californian?

Newhall: They have a house system there, the quad, around which stood different houses of about forty to forty-five kids apiece. This was a big school with about five hundred of us. Most of the schools out here in California had a hundred to a hundred-fifty students. I was in Dickinson House at Lawrenceville. The first night we all had to get up and introduce ourselves.

When we were finished the housemaster said, "Well, do you young men have any questions?" And so a snotty kid from the upper New York East Side--Barney-something--got up and said, "I'd like the fellow from California to stand up. I've never seen one." There I was. So it was good old Scott against the school. It was about an even balance. I had them all in line in about three or four weeks. [laughter]

Riess: You were that much of a personality?

Newhall: No. Actually at all my schools we all got along pretty well. Look, I really loved all my housemates at all schools. (One poor little guy at Webb I scared to death with a dirty trick by sending a ghost to visit him in the middle of the night. I have always regretted that.) Of the kids I have known in school, I can't think of any I didn't really like. Some I am very close to, but others not so close. They accepted me pretty fast because we got along, and I was always pretty active in sports.

Riess: Whom did you most admire then?

Newhall: My parents, I guess.

Riess: You talked about your older brother.

Newhall: My brother, yes. But I also admired the lifestyle of Harry Johnson's older brother. He had a lot of money and drank too much.

Drinking and Driving

Riess: Talk about the drinking. You started drinking when you were fourteen? Secretly?

Newhall: This was during Prohibition, and my family did not drink. They never served hard liquor. I never saw my father take a drink. I don't think he did. He used to go away to the Bohemian Club for three weeks every year, and he did say once, "Well, there is nothing like a good old-fashioned cocktail." So I guess maybe up there he had a drink or two. He was not interested in alcohol, however. He didn't need to be.

My mother didn't do any drinking at all. Her father's alcoholism had been too unhappy for her. So my days with drinking were just rebellion. Again, the guilt deal.

Drinking became very stylish during Prohibition. You get the F. Scott Fitzgerald scenario--the Great Gatsby and all these people around dancing the Charleston. Jesus, I was brought up winning Charleston cups! Drinking--they used to call it flaming youth. We all tried to live up to this. Drinking was quite an escape. I don't know anything about cocaine or any of the other fashionable late twentieth century narcotics. I never got into that.

I admired some of the older boys. My brothers and cousins amused themselves with a lot of drinking at the country clubs, social clubs, and I admired them. I wanted to be a raconteur, a boulevardier, bon vivant. Out at the Marin Club, I took a couple of gin fizzes. I think Bill Johnson, my friend's older brother, we were all sitting around the locker room. I would feel the effects of it. I'm an alcoholic in that I tend to go out of my mind when I drink. I normally love people, but when I drink, I love them more. Even more!

I quit drinking, by the way, when I was twenty-one. Then I took it up again a little in World War II, and found that, uh oh,I still can't handle old Demon Rum. Then I quit forever. But before that I couldn't stop drinking because I was having such a good time

spending money. We'd go traveling. We'd hire a plane and fly to Bolinas and land in the sand strip there on the beach. It was a kind of carbon copy of the lost generation after World War I. It was clever, I thought.

I'd come over to San Francisco for an evening of gaiety. During the winter there were "assemblies" or debutante balls. I'd get a cab driver, go to a speak-easy and get a couple of bottles of gin or whiskey, and we'd be off.

My first appearance in print in the San Francisco Chronicle was an occasion that occurred during the coming-out ball of Jane Henley, Ben Henley's sister--he was a school-mate of mine at Tamalpais--at the St. Francis Yacht Club. I'd go to a party and I'd hop up on the bandstand--I think I mentioned that I loved music and used to know a lot of musicians--and I'd grab the megaphone and give the dancers a couple of horrible choruses of whatever they were playing, "Baby Face" or "Me and My Shadow" or something like that. I was impossible.

That night I went down to a place called Joe Finocchio's. (It eventually became Finocchio's on Broadway.) It was right at the Union Square side of the Stockton Street tunnel, the third floor, Joe Finocchio's bootlegger speak-easy. I left the party and went up there, and I had a few gin fizzes. He had a very famous pink gin. It was horrible stuff. A friend of mine, "Dukie" Moore, was with me. We got a couple of pint flasks of pink gin. I was all of fifteen.

I jumped in my car which my father had very sweetly given to me. It was a Model A Ford roadster--nobody could afford Packards or Mercedes any more. I had a siren in the car, which you are not supposed to have, and spotlights. I got in the car, and we roared down Chestnut Street with the siren wide open. "Here comes Scott, the great Scott." But then who should come out of the side street and directly into our line of flight but another car, and I hit him. I rolled over two or three times.

I said, "Dukie, are you alive? Are you all right?" He said, "Yes, I'm fine." He had blood on him, but he was all right. I said, "Hey, we've got to get rid of the evidence." We opened the back and got these bottles out and began to bust them on the fender. Up came the police. The horrible thing about it was that it happened to be an off-duty police car I'd run into. I was in pretty bad shape by this time. They dragged me down to the Marina Station and booked me.

My father came down to get me. This poor man. You talk about guilt. Me, I didn't care, but I felt that what I'd done to him was something fierce. That's why I had all this guilty conscience and depression. He dragged me home. I was sick all over the floor of

the police station. It was a very unpleasant scene, I promise you.

He got Judge Zook, who was Mary Katherine Zook's father, and they took me down to the courtroom of Judge Sylvan Lazarus. He was a fine gentleman, indeed, because he heard all of the evidence, and he said, "All right. This is a terrible thing you've done. Don't you do it again. I'm going to put you on probation." He let me go, and the poor policeman with whom I had collided said, "But Judge, aren't you going to do anything to this man?" He said, "Yes, I'll take his license away." So I gave him my license and left.

The next day a voice came on the phone. "Newhall?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Look, this is the police department. We don't know what to do with your license. Will you come down and get it before we lose it?" So I went down and got my license. You can see what a bizarre environment I was living in. How can anybody survive this kind of nonsense? I'm telling this story with no trimmings, and I have never forgotten it. You will find this first item in any file the Chronicle has on me--where Scott Newhall, the son of Almer Newhall, former president of the Chamber of Commerce, was arrested for drunk driving.

I'd drink. I went to Europe one time--in 1932.

Riess: You're still so young in all of this.

Newhall: Well, I was in a hurry.

Riess: I can't understand how the years get so compressed there between 1921 and 1932.

Newhall: I guess we really lived pretty fast. The timing is pretty accurate. You see, I was married when I was nineteen. It was the beginning of my sophomore year. By nineteen, Ruth and I went to Europe in the summertime. I was trying not to do any drinking--went over on an old freighter. This was before we were married.

Lost Weekend in Paris

Newhall: I wanted to see the Davis Cup matches in France. We were in London. So we got on one of these big, old Handley-Page "Hannibals"--they were huge, absolutely enormous old planes, seventy miles an hour--and flew over to Paris. They had an open bar on these planes, and by the time we got to Paris I was all loaded for bear, whatever the bear was. That's about the last thing I can remember. The Davis Cup games were going to start the next day at Roland Garros stadium. I remember I ran into a bellboy on the way to the rooms. He said, "Do you want to see Paris?" I said, "It sounds good to me."

I woke up, and Ruth wasn't in her room. I said, "I wonder where Ruth is?" She'd left word that she had gone to another hotel. I called her and said, "Well, we've got to get to the Davis Cup matches." She was pretty frosty and snapped, "What do you mean? They are almost over." And she was quite right. While I was drinking my way through the bistros of Paris, two days of Davis Cup matches had been completed. That year in 1932 the Australians were playing the Japanese in one of the final rounds, and there was only one more match to play left that afternoon. I said to Ruth, "Okay, come on, we'll go." And we did, but anyway I lost two and one-half days.

I have only one or two memories of it still. I remember coming out of the sewer in Paris into a fancy jewelry shop on the Champs Elysee. That's about all I can remember because I was headed for Harry's American Bar. That was the last thing I can remember. Alcohol had become a major problem. I don't know if you've ever had the experience of passing out, but it's terrible, terrible.

When I got back, we were married, but I feared our marriage was going to break up. So I went to a psychiatrist for about six months or a year, and I pretty well got off of it. [laughs] I can give you chapter and verse on some of this Freudian psychiatry. Our marriage survived, but the psychiatrist who managed to cement our relationship ended up getting a divorce. Anyway, it worked out fine.

Riess: He was Freudian?

Newhall: I guess so. It was psychotherapy.

Riess: Was he someone that you found on your own?

Newhall: My mother did, or some friends of hers. I was still, you know, playing at the part of a "son" or "husband." I didn't want to lose my marriage. I never wanted to lose Ruth, so I would have done anything.

Alcohol was a tremendously important factor in the lives of most of my colleagues, no matter how many of them will try to deny it. Most of them drank, a few didn't. Many, many, of my friends, and old-time friends, have died from alcohol or drugs, or it has ruined their lives.

Riess: Are you talking about the newspaper world?

Newhall: Socially. The newspaper--that's a different phase of drinking. There is a lot of drinking there but a little bit different.

The Social Straitjacket##

Newhall: Many, many women I know who were from that same general environment, or world culture have been bright and well-educated and totally frustrated because they have had to be wives. That's the way it was. Many, many of them turned to alcohol--perhaps equally devastating drugs--and have either died or are just living on borrowed time, pretty well sedated with alcohol or some other equally gaudy chemicals. This was, I think, tragic, because many of the social friends I have known were bright, bright women. They never had a shot at a job or serious career.

I know one girl. I say "girl"--she was a girl then. (Ruth says I'm never to use the word, "girl," but too bad.) Her life was saved because she came to work at the paper when I was the editor of This World. She came from a distinguished family. It opened up a whole new world to her. It wasn't a particularly happy world, but it's a totally different experience from just having to be a hostess for some husband and go to a party or entertain--which was the life that many of these people led!

Much of my exploration and experimentation was an effort to avoid a certain aspect of the life that either my family or my friends were getting into. That was this straightjacket of the social order of San Francisco society. I don't know how else to describe it. I just absolutely, physically almost, had to turn and shut the door on the social fast lane. I think it is impossible to live this life where you go duck hunting in the duck season and grouse shooting in the grouse season, and you go down for the Santa Anita Handicap for the races, and you go somewhere else for the Kentucky Derby and where you know exactly where you are going to be year after year by the calendar, and there is no time left for free living and roaming around.

There are other things in life than entertaining or being entertained at a country club. I think women have a better shot at a real career now. The next generation of these same people I am talking about have almost all got college degrees now. They may turn to alcohol--who knows--but at least the women have a chance to go somewhere and do something rather than just sit home and wait for a husband.

Riess: So your mother's spiritualism you might think of in those terms?

Newhall: Maybe. My mother never lived that kind of life. She always had something going. In my early life, at fourteen or fifteen there was nothing but alcohol for another six or seven years.

Riess: You were really throwing yourself away.

Newhall: I didn't know what I wanted at all. For whatever it is worth, just as a generalization, that was the way I eventually got into the newspaper business. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and I was afraid to meet people. I may sound very assertive or assured, but I was terribly insecure in a way. I said, "Well, Scott, why not go to work at a newspaper. You'll meet all kinds of people, all kinds of businesses, and you'll decide what it is you want to do with your life or your career. Incidentally, I may find out what it is I want to do." And I stayed in the newspaper world ever since.

Alaska Cruise with the Stewart Edward Whites

Riess: You decided to go to Cal and chose art as a major, but was there any earlier manifestation of the art interest?

Newhall: Well, one of the most important years of my life was after I departed the Webb School. I worked in a wholesale drugstore here in San Francisco, Coffin and Redington: M. Sherwood Coffin was one of my mother's entourage--we used to call him Uncle Buff--and he had this wholesale drug firm and put me to work. I went to work there as a packer and in the chemical laboratory. I had done pretty well in chemistry in school. So I went there, and I was still drinking. This is 1929-1930.

Well, I mentioned during her spiritualist role that some of my mother's closest friends were Betty and Stewart White. He was an author down in Hillsborough and came from quite a distinguished family, and Betty came from a marvelous family. And they had no children. My mother probably told them that poor old Scotty was having his problems.

Stewart had been a big game hunter, one of the early big game hunters in Africa. He had explored a lot of Kenya and Tanganyika. He loved Alaska, and he had a beautiful yacht, eighty-eight foot yacht--Kuru was the name of it. We went down to his Hillsborough home for dinner one night--it was when I was working at the drugstore--and Betty turned to me and said, "How would you like to come on a cruise through the Alaska Inside Passage with us?"

Well I jumped for joy. I never heard such a delightful thing and I immediately accepted. I think it was a put-up job, but anyway she said, "Oh, marvelous, because we have never had any youngsters or children, and we'd like it." I joined them in Seattle in early June. The Kuru wasn't exactly palatial, but it was very comfortable. It had the owners' quarters astern and then a couple of guest suites amidships and then they had an engineer and a cook. The five of us went cruising from Seattle up through the Inside

Passage beyond Juneau, and then we were going out to Kodiak Island to make photographs of the Kodiak bears.

Stewart White didn't shoot animals anymore. He made movies of them. He was a remarkable man, remarkable. And Betty was the warmest, most charming woman I ever knew except for my mother--very similar actually. She was very active in the spiritualist thing too. That cruise saved my life, seriously, I think, though I didn't quit drinking yet. I loved it. I was deckhand, guest and quartermaster. I used to keep the teak decks clean, and I stood watch at the wheel most of the time.

Southeastern Alaska--I don't know whether you have ever been up there--is the most beautiful sort of temperate zone jungle you can imagine. There is nothing but the virgin world around you. There were very few boats then. This was 1930. You might see another stray yacht or a fishing boat each day. We'd anchor at a cove every night, or in a little bay, and there were crabs to catch and clams to dig. And we could go out with a lasso, or shovel or pitchfork, and just grab a salmon. There are trout in the streams and halibut in the bays. I don't know how many people have had this experience.

While I was there on board, I had the evenings to myself. We'd play a lot of cribbage. I learned to navigate, or at least to pilot, and quite a lot about seamanship. We went out to Sitka, which was very isolated then and more or less Russian and empty. Southeastern Alaska was just totally empty in 1930. Maybe it still is.

In the library on board the Kuru there was a book, by Sylvanus Morley I think it was, on the Mayan Indian anthropological investigations in Yucatan, and another account about digging in Chichen-Itza by, I think, an archeologist's wife, Ann Morris, or something like that, and another book on modern art by somebody in which the author covered the Impressionists or early Expressionists. On board the Kuru I experienced my first excitement with painters like Paul Gauguin, Paul Klee, Modigliani, Matisse, Van Gogh and the twentieth century new wave of artists.

I was enchanted by the Mayan Indians and exploring and digging and so on in Central America. So that became to me this fantasy, this dream. Art--I have never forgotten it because I used to try to paint a few pictures and carve some stuff. So I came back from the cruise and then I went to school. My mother talked to Mr. Webb, and he was a very fine gentleman. He wrote a letter to the people over at Berkeley that although I didn't exactly have a diploma, I had amassed more than enough credits for college entry. They took me on at UC. They let me go to school there.

I thought, "Well, what do I know nothing about?" and I guess it was art. At UC, along with art courses, you could take anything you

wanted to in Letters and Science. I had to join a fraternity.

Riess: What's that mean, "What do I know nothing about?"

Newhall: Well, some area where I'd had no experience, and that was art.

Riess: You might have said, "Well, what do I know something about?"

Newhall: Well, I still was trying to explore the world. I had to know everything.

Riess: So your ego was very much intact. It's not like you were coming in the back door.

Newhall: What, at Cal? I was a big shot. Come on, I always am--the "King." [laughter] No, no, look, I'm fooling you a little. No, I had some friends there, one officer or another of the deans. My mother knew a lot of people, and I was the eighteenth member of my mother's family to join the Zeta Psi fraternity. It wasn't that I was coming in as if I had a cloud over my head. They were lucky to get me, come on, sort of. Look, it isn't that bad.

Riess: In fact you could have gone to Yale, you said.

Newhall: I had been accepted at Yale, at Cal, and at one other university--whatever I sent my papers to. I don't think it was Harvard. Anyway, three schools--Stanford, Yale, Cal. No, I didn't send anything into Cal.

After all, one should remember that the University of California was a public school. I mean, in the American sense of the word going to Cal was like going to Public School Number Ten in Cleveland, from my point of view. It wasn't until later I learned that it was the most renowned academic center in the world, and it still is.

Riess: That was a fine voyage with the Stewart Edward Whites.

Newhall: That was tremendously important. It really was. Again, it was another life-saving experience.

Riess: Did you take trips with your family?

Newhall: I never went out in the Pacific or to the Orient with them, but my father--being a Yale alumnus was very important to him because all his family had gone there, so he went back to his tenth and then his twentieth and then his twenty-fifth class reunions. He took his whole family back to both the twentieth and the twenty-fifth.

When our family was crossing the country we must have been something like Attila the Hun with his impediments, all these

nomadic people crossing the Asian tundra. We traveled with about ten or twelve of us because he would take Aunt May who was a Foster or a Scott relative and "Townie" White [Lynn Townsend White]--I mentioned him, he became president of Mills--and Artie Foster, and Aunt May's son who is a dear friend, and the three of us children. And then they'd usually take along somebody to help a bit with the packing and so on. We'd actually be about ten people, and we'd go to New York.

I didn't go to his Yale class reunion. My father went up to New Haven by himself. We came back one time by the Panama Canal, a nice trip. The next time we came back maybe the same way, maybe in the train. Going back there on the Overland Limited was quite a thing in itself. It got so where the porters--you know, I'd go to school back there and other trips and the Pullman porters would remember you.

I remember when I had to leave Lawrenceville, the sleeping car porter was a dear man. He said, "Isn't the young gentleman leaving early this year?" I will never forget that. I said, "Yes, I'm leaving early." That was all I would say. This was in Chicago. When I got off the train in Benicia I was so confused I gave him a $50 bill instead of a tip. That was a lot of money in those days.

Travels with Father

Newhall: My father turned one time to my mother and he said, "Anna, I'm going to take the boys"--and by that he meant my younger brother and me--"travelling." A friend of his was this fellow Bill Boeing who built the airplanes and had a home up in Seattle. He said, "I have to go up and see Bill, and I think I had better take the boys along so that I will get to know them better. You've had them all to yourself."

Off we went on the train to Seattle, Hally and I and my father. We got to Portland, stayed at the Multnomah Hotel, and he hired a young fellow from the YMCA to come and take care of his sons while he went out to do his business. This young man in Portland took us over to visit a couple of huge sailing ships that were tied up on the river there, and up the mast we went. We had a good time. He bought us a couple of chocolate milkshakes, which was a rare treat we thought, and he brought us back. Then we had nothing to do.

We had rooms overlooking the front entrance to the hotel. I have always encouraged my brother to misbehave while I didn't. We began filling up paper laundry bags or pillow slips or some kind of bags and dropping them out of the front window on people as they

came in the hotel. Well, of course, my poor father came in along with the manager and two or three people, crying, "What the devil is going on here?" I mean we drove him crazy.

We got to Seattle, and we were pretty good spirited, and he didn't know what to do with us. Hally and I behaved terribly in public together. I can't describe it all--don't remember it all--but my father was so wonderful. He never hit us or really did much of anything to discipline us properly.

Then we got on board the Emma Alexander--the old Alexander ships used to go back and forth up and down the coast. He had gotten a very fancy suite on board because they had no regular cabins available. But because my father knew the people who owned the line they put us in the owner's suite up behind the bridge. Well, we made such a racket on the bridge, including at one point getting Hally to run in and start blowing the steam whistle, that I don't think he and anyone on board ship could have stood it very much longer.

We came back down here, and I remember his telling my mother, he said, "Anna, you were right, and I was wrong. I don't ever want to be seen in public with your children again." That was the only thing he ever said. We were really terrible, terrible. I don't know what I would have done if Hally and I had been my children. I probably would have dropped them into the Seattle gutters and left town--and let the police handle it.

We went to this very stylish garden party. Everybody was at the Boeings' place--they had a nice estate up there in Seattle--everybody was done up in his white linen jacket and the two-toned white shoes. Hally and I knocked over a tray of drinks, I remember, among other things. We were rough-housing as children theoretically will. It was just terribly embarrassing for the poor man, and he never did anything. He should have put us in leg irons and chained us to the hotel toilet.

Social Teas and Musicales

Riess: Were your parents interested in the Sierra Club or hiking groups?

Newhall: My mother and father would have contributed or supported anything like that, but they were not particularly involved in hiking themselves. They weren't all that physical because my father was so heavy and so on. But at our house she would continually sponsor everything. She was very active working for this orphanage over in Marin County, called Sunny Hills. And the Sunny Hills orphanage sponsored the great Marin County Grape Festival.

In Marin County the big thing was the Grape Festival. The best people set up booths and sold things in the style of a country fair. Most of the merchandise was nice, harmless, upper middle-class schlock. My father and Dr. Lynn White, Sr. ran a famous hamburger stand called Victor and Oscar. Other booths were pushing cakes, lemonade, throwing baseballs and kissing booths and other such cultural memorabilia. One year when I was about twelve or thirteen I organized Ye Olde Curiosity Shop where I set up a display of old flasks and whiskey bottles I had picked up from time to time on the Bolinas beach. Please don't ask me to elaborate on this.

My mother was very much involved with her Thursday afternoon musicales. I was always fascinated to watch the cars drive up the hill to the front door. They were filled with ladies with white gloves and white shoes and skirts. Seta Stewart was a Berkeley woman. She played the piano very well professionally. She'd be over a lot for these musicales and tea parties. My mother would also get some sort of reigning oboists or violinsts and or a couple of other stringed instruments.

If you have ever heard a woman's tea party from a distance it's like being in the San Diego Zoo--trapped in the bird house down there. If you are a young boy upstairs you can't get a word of it, but there's this distant indistinct chatter that goes on. Anybody who has heard an afternoon tea party in full cry will never forget it. I remember coming home, and I'd go up the back stairs and then listen to this, and then we'd sneak down the stairs to see who all was there. It was very nice. It was just part of the routine.

In the springtime or Fall in San Rafael my mother used to trot all of her captive Sunday luncheon guests out for a walk through Black Canyon to see the wild flowers or the waterfall or whatever it was. They'd all have to get out and trot along and identify the birds and the bees and the trees and you name it. I loved it. I used to go along. You see, I used to go along on a lot of the stuff with my mother. My father, he wasn't physical. He wouldn't go walking along--couldn't much. I loved it.

Riess: Who was Seta Stewart?

Newhall: Old Mr. Stewart was a Scotsman who settled in Berkeley. He ruled his family with an iron hand, or iron rod, and he had four daughters and one son, Roy Stewart. Roy Stewart became a Matson Line captain, sailing from here out to the Islands and back to get away from the females. In the end the old gentleman died, and there was the mother and four sisters, and only one ever married, I believe.

Seta was the musical sister. It was kind of like a Jane Austen situation, I guess. During World War II, Roy got a ship, he came back to the sea, but there again he also took to the spirits. So

along with being a captain he was the black sheep of his family and drank his way, I think, across the ocean. I'm not quite sure. [laughter]

Whenever his ship went out in the bay through the Golden Gate he would come in quite close to Bolinas, because the Stewarts would be among all our guests in Bolinas. And they had this great big American flag and they would hold it up so that with a spy glass, I guess, Roy could see it on shore. He'd come in as close as he could bring one of those ships. He always lifted a flag hoist, and then he went on his way to the Hawaiian Islands. So that was the big thing in Bolinas. We'd all have to get out and watch Roy sail his ship out of the Golden Gate on his way to the Islands. They all had a good time.

Riess: How about the Boeings? You knew the family?

Newhall: Sure. My father, he knew an awful lot of people, he really did, some of whom would be sort of part business and part social. Bill Boeing was a campmate of his, I think, up at the Bohemian Club. I'm not sure. I'd met him, but I didn't know him; he was much older.

Nevada Tour

Newhall: The greatest trip we ever had with my father and mother--now that you mention the trips--was where Governor Scrugham of Nevada invited us to take a tour of the state. This is in 1925. Nevada then was all desert--not just 99 percent desert as it is today. So off we started, and it was one of the most memorable trips I have ever made.

There were all dirt roads, maybe a little pavement. We went all the way down past Fallon, Yerington, Tonapah, Goldfield, Beatty, Las Vegas. Las Vegas then was literally a cowtown and a railroad stop to get water, because there is a water table there under the desert. Of course, there was gambling in Nevada then. Hell, we kids could gamble if we wanted to, but we didn't have any money.

But the governor was quite a character. He knew everybody in Nevada--I mean literally. You had to because there were only about 75,000 people in the state then. That's about the number of people that go to a Cal game now.

Then we went north on the east side of the state to see a state monument up there, Lehman Caves, limestone caverns they'd just discovered. We'd camp out some places because there were only these little ghost towns in Nevada. But once in a while we would stop off in an old hotel that looked like something from the TV "Bonanza"

set. At the Lehman Caves Hally and I got to fighting in the governor's tent. He and I and the governor were sleeping there and we got to fighting and we knocked over the Coleman lantern and set his tent afire.

This was the kind of people we were--terrible! Again, it was memorable. It was a wonderful trip. Artie Foster was along and Townie White. I mentioned them before.

I was young, but I had a camera with me--somebody had given me a camera--and I wanted to get pictures of all old prospectors and mine shafts and all the wild stuff. At one point someone said, "There're some wild horses." So I said, "All right. I'll be back. Stop." They stopped, and the governor stopped, and I started off for these wild horses with my little Brownie camera--it was just a box--and I made some pictures of what I thought was going to be a marvelous scene from a movie of the wild west in the raw.

Then all of a sudden this damn horse put his head up and began to sniff, and he took a look at me, and I guess it was the stallion that had all those mares out there, and he started after me. My God! I turned tail and I began to run and I began to cry, "This horse is going to kill me!" Townie and Artie, our colleagues, started after me in the desert. Well, finally the stallion figured he had me under control and turned around and left.

During the trip I went out hunting for Indian arrowheads for the first time. Hally and I each found an arrowhead near St. Thomas, now under water in Lake Mead by southern Nevada. This started me off on American archaeology or anthropology. Ruth and I for many years later on used to go up every week and look for arrowheads in the Humboldt sink near Lovelock. We found thousands of them--beautiful--so much fun to look for them. They were lost in the fire in Piru. They have a record of our collection over at the Cal anthropology department. Bob Heizer, a friend of ours in the anthropology department, put together this record of Piute arrowheads.

Riess: What did "Kuru" mean, do you know?

Newhall: "Kuru" means water buffalo in Swahili. This was the name of Stewart White's yacht.

One story--it has no place here, but Stewart White told it. He'd been over in Africa big game hunting and stuff at Kenya and Tanganyika. He told me that coming back from one trip he got to New York--he'd been three or four months there in Kenya--they called for a Red Cap for the train or something, and Stewart said, "I saw there was a black man standing in front of me and I just automatically started talking to him in Swahili. And he got down on the ground and began bowing to me this way." [laughter] This just wouldn't

happen today. At least I don't think so.

Riess: And a bit more on Coffin and Redington?

Newhall: Coffin and Redington was a wholesale drug firm. The Coffin family name died out here because they had four daughters. By that, I mean the name disappeared. Young John Redington married one of the Crocker granddaughters. I can't remember whom--both of those families were among those old San Francisco families.

Riess: Your friend "Dukie," what's his whole name?

Newhall: "Dukie" Moore. He was a localite, too. I'm sorry I can't tell you his first name. It might have been something like Duane.

Those Who Choose Not to Shoot Duck

Riess: Did you keep up with all these friends from your childhood?

Newhall: Well, Harry Johnson is my closest friend still. I know them all. A lot of them are dead, believe me. I'm not all that young myself. I did keep up with them, but now we're all sort of getting older and apart or dead.

Riess: Some of the ways in which you rebelled didn't separate you from them?

Newhall: Listen, I was only one of many, many rebels. We all did in our own way. I wasn't the only person who drank or who passed out in Paris.

Riess: You weren't the only person who thought that maybe this wasn't the only thing in life--to go duck hunting?

Newhall: Well, I was one of the few who just went off on his own and into his own business. There had been no newspaper men in my family here. It was just one of those things like going to the art department. Remember the Depression hit us all. It was a new experience.

A lot of my old friends, most of them, went into their old family business or allied enterprises. A few of them may actually have become, I guess, artists. Some of their daughters and sons became nurses, teachers or engineers. Most of them took a more normal routine career. A lot of them never really did work. Some of them still had enough money to live on. In my opinion, the luckiest thing that ever happened to me was that we went broke. I really mean that.

Riess: Were they your network when you were here on the Chronicle?

Newhall: No. My earlier childhood, youthful friends were different, because I got into the newspaper business, and that's a whole new world. I gave it everything I had. That was our whole life--Ruth and I were in that together more or less the whole time--and in a sense we still are--. [pauses] I just didn't have time. Newspaper work was so consuming.

The Poor Girls##

[Interview 2: March 23, 1988]

Newhall: I've been thinking about the girls. They were bright and they were attractive--believe me--and they were going to end up as either dipsomaniacs or on drugs of some sort. They died young, a lot of them, or committed suicide. It was very sad. I remember clearly--we used to have these junior assemblies and then the debutante parties--for some reason or other I really felt very deeply about how these poor girls had to sit and wait to be asked to dance.

The boy would have to go up--. No girl ever came up and said, "Here, will you dance with me?" Or if she did, it was very unusual. They'd have these so-called wallflowers. I used to walk around and literally try to dance with all of them. Some of them would sit there the whole evening, and I figured their hearts were breaking. They must have been. I don't know, you probably never went through this, but in my generation those girls had a hell of a bad time.

Riess: Girls still wait for the phone to ring.

Newhall: I can remember them all dressed up with their white gloves and their organdy gowns, sitting on the side on ballroom chairs, sitting there, and everyone can see that nobody is asking them to dance. I really felt very sympathetic and felt one had one's duty to do. As a result I didn't like the parties all that much because the girls I really liked and loved to kid around with, they were always popular and dancing so you didn't have to worry about their being lonely.

Riess: I'm glad there were some boys torn up about this dilemma.

Newhall: I tell you, even at that age, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, I could see it. There were always a lot of girls around among our families and friends.

Resorts, Rubicon Lodge

Riess: Was the Newhall land in southern California among your vacation destinations as a child?

Newhall: Well, oddly enough, the farms, ranches, included lots and lots of property, but they were basically totally working ranches and there were no real accommodations for us to go to. We always had a house or two or something where people could go and stay for just a visit.

But aside from the ranches, there were a number of comfortable summer resorts that other members of the family had. My Greatuncle George Newhall, he built his home down in Hillsborough. It was called La Dolphine, a copy of the Petit Trianon over in the France of Louis XV. It is still there--down in Hillsborough. La Dolphine was quite grand, but again that was more a regular city winter home. Uncle George had a tremendous lodge up at Lake Tahoe on the west side, on the California side. He had a yacht there, quite nice, the largest one on the lake.

Riess: Where?

Newhall: Rubicon Lodge it was called, about in the middle, just north of Emerald Bay between the north and south end of Tahoe.

Riess: A number of older families were there, the Livermores.

Newhall: Livermore--I think they're a little further north. One of the Jewish families from San Francisco had a nice place up there. Many Bay Area families had splendid Tahoe summer homes--the Meins, the Crockers, the Stanley Dollars, the Fullers, and many, many more.

At Rubicon Lodge on the west side of Tahoe Uncle George had his boathouses and the main summer household, but he also owned about literally half of the Nevada side. He had a hunting lodge over there with all the deer heads, stone fireplaces, cook ovens and stuff like that. And that was called Skunk Harbor. It's still there, I think. Have you been to Tahoe? You notice on the Nevada side there is still a huge open stretch, running north from Glenbrook for ten or fifteen miles up to about Incline Village, or up to Secret Harbor.

Well, Uncle George owned that whole thing--it must have been ten miles--and finally sold it to George Whittell, who was a real character out of Hillsborough or Burlingame. The Whittells were very rich: George had a zoo and a garage full of Duesenbergs and so forth. All I am saying, though, is that in terms of summer places--the family could go over and camp out on the Nevada side if they wanted to. I think it's now a Nevada state park or some kind of public preserve.

Riess: Yes, maybe it's Sand Harbor.

Newhall: The Fullers I think owned Sand Harbor. Anyway, the Skunk Harbor Lodge was a big piece of Tahoe scenery going from Glenbrook up. I think it's still pretty virgin. I don't know. I've not been there for quite a long time, and all that went down the family drain in 1929 or 1930.

Pre-Depression Sense of Safeness

Riess: When you were a fourteen-year-old did you feel the ripples of concern about family finances?

Newhall: No. We were oblivious. I always thought we were relatively poor, seriously, because sometimes our cars weren't quite as big as a visitor's car. You know, kids are very sensitive about cars--among other things. As a matter of fact, today I just went out and bought myself an old Cadillac, and I haven't bothered with a Cadillac for many, many years because one doesn't really drive them anymore. It can be embarrassing. But I was looking for a comfortable sedan, and so I bought an eight-year-old Cadillac. I've got a lot of cars. I'll get into that someday. Automobiles have really been a big part of my life. They really have.

In our San Rafael materialization we lived very simply, and my mother was always saying, "Oh, we don't have enough money, Almer." But I just took it for granted that there would always be enough to keep things going. As I say, our domestic world wasn't elaborate, it wasn't fancy, but it was very comfortable with plenty of household help, and we had gardeners and a washerwoman and a sewing woman and young women to take care of each of us kids, and some maids, upstairs and downstairs and so on.

I really mean that--very simple and homey and kind of nice. Nobody was dressed up much in uniform, except for the butler when people were coming for dinner. And once they came, they never left. When any of the staff got old, either my mother would get them a home or a little house in Bolinas or put them up in the rooms. She kept putting more and more rooms in the attic to take care of some of the people who got old and were dying. Of course, they died to a certain extent younger than they do now.

Riess: That's such a nice feeling, that nothing would ever be discarded in an offhand way. It must be a very reassuring feeling to a child. It's like saying there will always be somebody to care for you.

Newhall: You are absolutely right. It was all very permanent. It was a

status of living that was going to go on and on, and one thought, well, one had to sort of carry it along. That first Depression was pretty shocking to a lot of people.

Finances, and the St. Francis Dam Disaster, 1928

Riess: Was your father on the board of the Newhall Land Company?

Newhall: Oh, yes. He was on the board of Newhall and the Bank of California and two or three or four other things. It mostly was an ancestral thing. I'm a member of the board of the Cypress Lawn Cemetery Association. I think my great-grandfather or grandfather started out at Laurel Hill. One just sort of does it.

Riess: But it didn't mean that he would come home and say at the dinner table--times when you didn't have mobs of interesting people around --"Anna, things aren't looking good."

Newhall: They never discussed it in my hearing, to my knowledge. One Christmas I remember toward the middle of the twenties my father gave my mother an envelope for Christmas. And she opened it--and I remember this--and read it and went into tears.

I said, "Well, what's the problem?" "No, no,no," she said, "nothing at all." My father was sort of patting her on the back. I think he probably handed her a note or something that had been paid off. I do know that she always had a worry as to whether she could maintain this household because they gave so much money away. This is quite true. Everybody was welcome.

One time she brought over a music teacher who used to come over from San Francisco to give us lessons. The chauffeur had an accident down at the gate leaving the home, and so the music teacher, far ahead of her time [laughs] suffered pain and whiplash. She ended up in one of our guest rooms for three months. She just had a ball, I think.

There were two or three times when kids would come in and live with us from the Hawaiian Islands, or from--there was a fire at the orphanage, and one of the kids had a bad foot because a burning log had fallen on it, and I guess he had a bone infection that didn't clear up. He lived there for six months or a year. There was always a little something going on.

Riess: When the St. Francis Dam broke that must have sent a financial ripple through the family.

Newhall: It's a very interesting story. I don't know if you want me to jump

ahead to it, but I will.

Riess: It's not so much ahead if it's 1928. The Depression was not until 1929.

Newhall: Ah, yes. The dam broke in '28, and the flood waters went through the ranch down there for about ten miles. I think six or seven people on the ranch--workers or pickers--were drowned. And then a year later in 1929 the bottom fell out. It's a very interesting business story, family business.

We were all so broke by this time. Families were trying to settle up their bank loans. I think my father owed half a million dollars which was a lot of money then. A half million now you can borrow it from some guy on 42nd and Broadway. My uncles, I think, owed more, and they tried to sell the whole Newhall ranch down there in Los Angeles County, about forty-eight, forty-nine thousand acres, for less than a million dollars. And nobody would buy it. People were land-poor then.

Well, the City of Los Angeles settled our suit--we had brought some kind of a damage suit against the city because the St. Francis Dam was the Los Angeles City water supply. They paid us about $780,000 or $790,000. That bailed us out in our ranching business. So the breaking of the dam, except for the poor people who were drowned, saved our lives. It's a strange twist perhaps, but that's what happened.

Riess: A few years later it turned out to be that. But at the time?

Newhall: Well, at the time I didn't pay much attention to it, really didn't.

Riess: I can understand that. I was just curious about whether these were big impacts or not.

Newhall: I wasn't down there at the time, so we were not so close or tied up in it all that anything that happened on the ranch had any significant emotional impact in a sense. You wouldn't want to lose the ranch, of course.

Riess: How upset was your father? How distraught because of the Depression?

Newhall: I never heard a word of complaint except, "Well, we have to sell the San Rafael house," or "We have to sell the Bolinas house."

Riess: You were only fifteen. I realize I am asking you to be a witness to a whole era at an age where most kids are only interested in themselves.

Newhall: Are we at what, '29 now? I was in Lawrenceville when the crash came

along. The young man at Lawrenceville with whom I ran away was from Denver. He had a patch in his trousers and he told me this was the most terrible thing that's ever happened to him. He said, "If it hadn't been for this Depression problem, I would never have worn a pair of pants with a patch in them." This hit him hard. Well, it hit a lot of those guys in Lawrenceville. They were hit pretty hard--they came from families of customer's men from Wall Street and brokers and investment houses and big spenders generally.

The Crash and the Move to San Francisco and then to Berkeley

Newhall: The Depression actually didn't have all that much impact on me. I got home and my mother and father said, "We have to sell the house." I said, "Well, what are we going to do?" He said, "We're going to move over to San Francisco, and we're going to live up in the third floor of Ginny's house--Virginia Whiting Newhall--my step-grandmother's house--and so we all moved in to the top floor of 2950 Pacific Avenue.

The house had an elevator that went from the garage up to the third floor. It's this huge Cape Cod cottage out there between Broderick and Baker. It overlooks the bay, and it was very comfortable. I went away to Webb School for a year, and when I got back we were moved into the third floor of 2950, which was originally built to resemble the interior of a Yankee whaling ship. My father still went to work down at the Newhall Building on California and Battery. My mother did the cooking. They had friends in. And the traffic at our dinner table was down to a trickle.

My father had always been a stamp collector. My Uncle Edwin, who lived there at 2950 Pacific, he also collected stamps. And so every night the two brothers would come home and talk and go over their stamp collections. My mother was going crazy because my Uncle Edwin was one of the most kind people in the world, sort of Santa Claus. But he was not what I would describe as a brilliant conversationalist. He and Dad would sit there and talk about their stamps by the hour. [laughter]

Anyway, I went away to Webb and almost graduated and got in all that trouble and came back and moved in there at 2950 Pacific. I had a little room there that had been, I'm sure, an upstairs maid's room, and I put some Egyptian sort of King Tut wallpaper around it so I'd feel kind of different from the redwood finish on the Cape Cod cottage. I still lived quite a social life.

I worked then at Coffin and Redington, the wholesale druggists. It was that summer I went cruising in Alaska with the Stewart Edward

Whites. My mother was determined apparently to get me into Cal, which she did; she did it herself, basically. She got hold of Mr. Webb and persuaded him to speak kindly of me to the Cal director of admissions. So then the whole family moved over to Berkeley and lived in a little house on Hawthorne Terrace.

Riess: Why did it require that they move to Berkeley?

Newhall: I don't know. Some of the Fosters came over to Berkeley too, Don't ask me why, they just did. My father wasn't very well and I'm sure that all those financial anxieties contributed to it. He spent all of his working time trying to figure out his life insurance and his debts. He never complained about it. He was very stout--I told you that--and he got sick.

Riess: Was it financially practical to live in Berkeley? Or was it a support system for you?

Newhall: Oh, I don't think it was a support system for me. I think my father and mother didn't want to come back and live in the third floor attic of a home that they had once owned. I don't know; we never discussed it that much. They just came over across the bay.

I think they bought the house, rented it or bought it, on Hawthorne Terrace. It was a typical north Berkeley hillside house, quite nice. My brothers and I lived in little rooms up in a tiny attic. I still kept doing quite a lot of drinking. I went to school, joined the art department, met Ruth there, and soon my life began to change.

Riess: You joined a fraternity, but you didn't live at the fraternity? You lived at home?

Newhall: I lived at home. It was cheaper. At the Zeta Psi house I think the room and board were $55 dollars a month.

III UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Promoting the Occident

Riess: Those were the years at Berkeley of the Social Problems Club. Did you belong to that?

Newhall: That was pretty much Popular Front, left wing. I had no respect for them. They were not the most magnetic people in my opinion. They were doctrinaire. This was more or less the time of the Popular Front and they were just espousing a straight, oh, Marxist line despite what they said. I had always found that very boring. But I knew a lot of these people, mind you, and some of them were good guys and good people.

I got involved at that point with the Occident magazine. It was a literary magazine on the campus. It had been sort of staggering along. So I got interested in it and went around and sold lots of subscriptions to it and got it going and became quite active with it. I guess my interest in promotions and stuff came out because I started giving interviews to people. Some of the Occident editors and managers--Dorothy Fraser and, I think, John Conrad--were pretty humorless and, again, doctrinaire.

I tended to be a little bit more mellow in my interests, so I set up an interview with the Daily Cal. I knew a lot of these guys around the student union: Wally Frederick, who is an old friend of mine from Marin. Did you know Wally?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: His wife Christine was an old San Rafael girl and a very close friend. Christine Brooks her name was. George Pettitt was there. He had been director of the Cal admissions office and sort of helped me get into Cal. So I began fooling around with some of the Daily Cal guys on the Occident.

But I set up this big interview. See, I really wanted to get

this Occident going. What the hell, if you are going to have a literary magazine, let's make it the most successful literary magazine in town! I told the Daily Cal reporter: "From now on the Occident is going to be more like Esquire magazine or The Saturday Evening Post." A lot of people bought subscriptions.

I came into the Occident office with a very successful circulation report, but I'll never forget Conrad and Dorothy sitting there looking so serious and furious. They both snapped at me: "Oh, we don't want that sort of an image about our Occident. You're just going to have to go." I was business manager, or circulation manager. So that was the end of my career with the Occident, although I had written quite a few pieces for them, articles of art criticism and other assorted intellectual disquisitions.

A Promoter at Heart

Riess: So that was your first attempt at a promotion.

Newhall: I suppose so, but I can't explain it exactly. You see, promotion and public relations can be fun. Basically, for the interest of the good people at The Bancroft Library, in some senses I'm a promoter at heart. I love people. They can be manipulated. By that I don't mean necessarily for any evil purposes, but it is fun to work with them. So it was just fun to get the kids at Cal, the students, to buy a subscription to the Occident. I'd get out there in the court near the student union and hustle the customers into buying the Occident at "special prices."

Riess: Do you have to know who you are manipulating? It sounds like in general you don't.

Newhall: No. I don't care. I don't want to be too subjective in all this except to explain sometimes my attitudes or outlook. I keep saying I love people as a group and individually. I go through life more or less trying to stimulate them into not being as dull as they might otherwise be. I don't know how else to put it.

In the newspaper business, for example, an editor's responsibility is to his customers--to make them read. But there are all kinds of techniques for informing people and making them read. Today the job of making people read is a little tough, particularly when you see what television is doing to overpower and sedate whole nations.

However, back to my life at Cal. I was promoting the Occident, but my major was art. I got into the art department just because nobody I knew was an artist.

Riess: I think that's the darndest reason.

Newhall: It's true. Everybody I knew was going into business. They were going to start as a messenger boy or going down to Central America to work in the company coffee plantation or some damn thing, and then rise to the top. I wanted to be an artist, and so I guess then I embarked on my Bohemian phase. I was a rotten artist, but I loved it. There were wonderful people there; we had a good time in that art department.

The Art Department

Newhall: I remember with great affection and respect most of our faculty members. There was Chiura Obata who was a Japanese guy--sent away to internment camp in World War II. He had a son, Kimio, who is a very good friend of mine, and a little daughter, too. The faculty members were great: Ray Boynton, Perham Nahl, Worth Ryder, John Haley, Margaret Peterson--there was a character, I don't know if she is still around.

Riess: I don't think so. There were a lot of politics in that department.

Newhall: Right. That's right. Art departments are not normally the most stable academic institutions in the world. They finally had to put in a Latin archaeology professor as chairman of the department because they were having squabbles. They tried to put an administrator in, I guess, to straighten it out a little bit.

Perham Nahl was a wonderful guy. He came from an old family of California artists. And I knew Eugen Neuhaus one of the department oldtimers. Bud Neuhaus, his son, and Kimio Obata were about my two closest friends. He's still around, isn't he, doing something or other? The son.

Riess: I don't know. The father Eugen Neuhaus is long gone. But you were not in the modern artists camp?

Newhall: I don't think there were any on there.

Riess: Well, Worth Ryder?

Newhall: Worth--he was good. He wasn't all that modern, but he was good. At Cal when I was there, we were concentrating on the Renaissance--not Tomorrowland.

Riess: I thought there was a real division between the people who were trying to bring in Hans Hofmann and the moderns, and the others.

Newhall: There probably was. Margaret Peterson--she painted a lot of these Picasso-like things. Worth Ryder would have been very eclectic, I think. I was his lantern slide operator. He taught art history when I was there, and I liked him very much, and I figured, well, the only way I could learn a little bit about art from the Renaissance on up through more or less Impressionism was by running the slides. I'd pick out all the slides and I got quite familiar with a lot of this stuff. I just enjoyed it. I took a lot of courses; I'm not a natural artist by any means. I'm terrible.

Riess: So your concentration was not necessarily on the painting then?

Newhall: Well, I certainly worked hard at it, but it was not my most distinguished career--take my word for it. I wish it had been. I've done all kinds of things. I love all kinds of things, but I've never done any of them very well.

Jazz

Newhall: Music is another field. [For more on music, see Appendix K.] My life has been totally wrapped up in what was then called "jazz," or music of the twenties, thirties, still in the forties. I've known lots of musicians, but I never became gifted enough to become a performing artist. I used to play the drums back in the schools. At Lawrenceville I used to sneak out at night and go up to New York and sit in with a jazz band at the Orpheum Dance Palace at 42nd and Broadway. They had to play all the time--ten cents a dance--so there was always one musician off taking a break. I either played the drums or a little piano or saxophone with them. I was terrible.

Riess: You just picked up those instruments?

Newhall: Yes. Well, we had to have piano lessons as children. But I was forever a bust at classical music. I really don't relate to it. So then my mother got this jazz teacher to come over to our San Rafael home. She was the one who stayed with us for months after her little accident down at the front gate.

I'm sorry. I wandered off Cal.

Philosophy and Gaining Perspective

Riess: Not to push this point, but you said at one point in your life if you weren't doing something well you weren't really interested in doing it. Now here you have yourself doing a little music, a little art. It doesn't exactly jibe with that idea.

Newhall: All right. I think I was speaking perhaps of academics, just the prerequisites you take in school. At Cal I really tried to take courses that I was interested in. I did pretty well there. I got a lot of "Cs." I got a few "As" also. I tried to take Russian. (Nobody I knew took Russian.) I never did learn to speak any Russian at all. It's a complex, terrible tongue. I only studied Russian for a year in Alexander Kaun's class.

I studied Chinese art. Henry Hart, a San Francisco oriental antiquities dealer came over and was a lecturer in Chinese art. His store here in San Francisco was on Union Square. I got to know him pretty well. I'd get to know my professors pretty well if I was interested. I really goofed off in paleontology until about the last three weeks when I suddenly discovered what paleontology was, and I never enjoyed anything better in my life--the second time around.

I took the typical philosophy courses. Psychology. Psychology I felt was very dull, I just didn't think much of it. You could go in there and get an "A" if you wanted, with just your left hand. I guess you still can.

The philosophy courses had a tremendous fascination for me, they really did, particularly 5A, or whatever the lower division course was where you ploughed along starting with Plato and Aristotle and Lucretius and ending up with Nietzsche and John Stuart Mill.

The University of California is the greatest thing that ever happened to me. It opened up a whole wide wonderful new world--perceptions of life and thought and culture--.

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Newhall: I am trying to state simply that at Cal "philosophy" as it was provided to us--I don't know if one "teaches" philosophy or not--opened up my life, because after you have been through about five or six or seven, even superficially, of the great philosophers or thinkers of history, you suddenly realize that right and wrong are not quite as right or quite as wrong as most people think. I have never forgotten that. That's what Cal did for me really.

From the mountaintop of philosophy one can watch the world with an enchanting, intellectual perspective--forgive me if I am phrasing this pompously.

I enjoyed many courses at Cal, most if not all in Letters and Science. I did not bother with engineering, economics and political science. Most of the other students were doing that.

By the way I took a course in Oriental history under Professor Boodberg--I do not immediately recollect his first name. And this was the damndest, most provocative experience in my classroom travels. We spent a whole semester looking at a map of China and Mongolia that Professor Boodberg had drawn on the blackboard. And we engaged in long dissertations on the rich Yellow River Valley soil called "loess" which sustains life in China.

Then we discussed for hours the meaning of certain Chinese ideographic characters. And finally Dr. Boodberg told each of us to select some Chinese word of our choice and write a paper on its historic implications.

Well, we all turned in our papers. I had chosen a character which in English sounds like "wang," and I believe this "wang" character means "king" in English. So I worked on my manuscript very, very hard and finally turned it in and waited expectantly for word of my great academic investigation into the literature of China. Well, the semester ended and none of us students heard a word from Dr. Boodberg.

The end of this saga is that the next year I happened to run across Dr. Boodberg down near Sather Gate, and with failing breath I asked the good doctor what he had thought of my exhaustive research and my solution to the mystery of "wang."

He wore thick glasses, as I recall, and peered at me with a kind of strange detachment and said: "Oh, I never read any of these papers--I haven't the slightest idea. My job is to make you study and think. Did you?" And then he walked away on his business.

Well this was still actually one of the most illuminating and exciting classes I ever got into at Cal. Although I still can't tell anybody what "wang" really means.

Training in Visual Arts

Riess: You have said that you credit your art training with giving you a kind of facility in laying out a newspaper.

Newhall: I think that the art studies I had at Cal have certainly been tremendously important to me professionally. The graphic concepts I assimilated or learned or practiced at Cal have colored my whole life. It has to do with the cars I buy, the whole life that we lead, the decorations of our home, our lifestyle. After all, our whole earthly environment is a perpetually changing art form.

I do know that because of my formal art training at Cal--if it

could be called formal--I never had any trouble graphically as far as I was concerned with newspapers or magazines or anything like that. I sat there as editor of the Chronicle for twenty years redesigning, replanning San Francisco as if I were Lorenzo The Magnificent himself. And all because I had some art training at Cal I considered myself--quite improperly--as the arbiter elegantiae of the San Francisco cityscape.

Riess: Did you think that you were going to go on with art?

Scott Meets Ruth and They Go To Europe

Newhall: I had no idea what I was going to do until Ruth walked into the classroom in Art 1A in my freshman year. She called the roll of our painting class. I was horrified, absolutely appalled that at the University of California anybody would come in and call the roll. And if they did call the roll that they would expect me to answer. Unfortunately this person who called roll in 1A was devastatingly attractive. I never forgot her.

Riess: How did you pursue her?

Newhall: I never got her out of my mind after that first time. She was the secretary of the art department at the time. And I began casually to drop by her office and say "Hi." We got to be pretty good friends, and I remember for some reason or other we were walking down the street toward her house one day. I said, "You know, I like to play tennis, but I also like to play jazz piano."

She said, "Oh, I can't believe you're any good. I'm a very good jazz pianist." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, I can play anything. I've got perfect pitch." (It wasn't quite that direct.) Then it sort of went like this, I think: I said, "Well, prove it to me." She said, "Okay, come on, we'll go to the house. It's a few blocks over there." She sat down at the family piano and played, "You're an Old Smoothie." I'll never forget that song. It was very popular. A woman called Ramona had made a hit-selling record of it that year. And we got to be pretty good friends and spent more and more time together. She was two or three years older than I was, but I was in kind of a hurry. I had to fill up those years fast.

Well, Eugen Neuhaus had organized a trip to Europe, an art seminar for his students. So Ruth and I--she talked to me about it --signed up for it. My mother figured she could put enough money together. (My father had just died at this time.)

Neuhaus had organized one of those go-go-go European tours, but for one reason or another we both decided we'd have a lot more fun and go cheaper doing it by ourselves. Neuhaus was furious because he needed a certain number of customers to make up his tour. But we made a deal to meet him and his party over there a little bit. So Ruth and I climbed on this old tramp freighter here in San Francisco, the Villanger--the two of us along with the other eight passengers or six passengers. It was the interocean liner, Westfal & Larsen line, routed through the canal, on over to Le Havre and then London. And we did the regular things. It was all pretty much proper.

Riess: Except you weren't married?

Newhall: No. We weren't married then. I'd only met her in September or whenever college starts, and sailed on the Villanger that next summer. But off we went. We went to London and the British Museum and the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery. Oh, it was marvelous. We were living hand to mouth--these little hotel rooms and so on. That's when I wanted to see the Davis Cup matches. That's when I went to France and I got so loaded. Oh my Lord! Anyway, I spent half my money for the whole trip in Paris apparently when I was out of my head and buying champagne instead of looking at pictures.

After the Davis Cup matches we were walking down a Paris boulevard and a little fellow came by on his bicycle with pedals and a little motor in it. I said, "Gee, that's a wonderful thing. Why don't we rent a couple of those little motor bicycles and let's ride around Europe." (We planned to run into Neuhaus in Florence, I think.)

So we bought a couple of Motobecanes--you know, to start the motor you pedal them and off they go. We started out from Paris and we went down through Lyons and Grenoble and to Nice, Cannes, around the French and Italian Rivieras, down to Pisa, and finally up to Florence. Then we stayed in Florence for quite a while because that's where all artists go.

Riess: Just with a little knapsack or something?

Newhall: Yes. We each had a little bag; it was nothing. You put in about half a gallon of gas in the little machines and it's good for a day. We had paid about 700 francs each for the machines. It wasn't much, probably thirty or forty dollars.

Then we started north from Florence. We had to get back to school. We didn't go to Venice, but we stopped in Padua because I wanted to see some Giotto frescoes there. It was a great little town. And Bologna. And then started climbing the Alps and all of a sudden there was the Austrian border. We didn't even know we were

going through Austria. We were headed for Germany, going around Switzerland.

The Austrians were just marvelous and the border guards said, "Oh, come and visit our nice country, come on." So then we went through the Dolomite mountains down to Innsbruck and then up over the hill and hit the German border. This was the beginning of Hitler. Those goddamn Germans--if you will forgive my language--refused to let us drive the bikes into the country because we didn't have an international driver's license. They confiscated our bicycles. So we had to catch a train, go into Munich.

Marriage

Newhall: We stayed in Munich for awhile, went through some museums and things, then went back to Paris, and then finally came on back. By this time I realized I just couldn't live without Ruth. I had been waiting all this time, my whole long life--I was nineteen by then--and I said I'm not going to let this girl get away.

We stopped off in Chicago to see the 1933 Exposition after visiting Ruth's uncle in New York, a newspaper syndicate publisher. Then we caught the train and came back home. And I wanted to get married. I wasn't going to waste any time, because a couple of young men--some crazy dentist and some customer's investment broker, a young man--were paying attention to her, and I didn't like that.

But her family didn't take kindly to the idea of losing their daughter. They had heard that I was a degenerate. Those were the words she used. She said, "I can't have my daughter marrying a degenerate." Besides, I think my future mother-in-law wanted Ruth to be the first female President of the United States of America, and if she was going to throw herself away on a drunk, forget it.

Riess: They were in Berkeley, the other beaus?

Newhall: Yes. They lived in Berkeley. Ruth had been very big in Berkeley High. She'd been class president, and she was the vice-president of the student body at Cal, and very active.

When I broached the subject, my mother was all for it. I guess she figured somebody else had better worry about me. But Ruth's family really didn't like it, and it was a terrible mess. I was never allowed in the Waldo house again, and Ruth was in terrible shape with them. I just persisted, and I did. Poor Ruth! I don't know how she stood it because there was her family--her life had been all planned out, I'm sure, and Mimi, her mother, was a very, very domineering person. Her father was furious--my mother had

known him earlier because he was a roommate of some guy who had been courting my mother one time.

Anyway, one day--this was late in November, we'd been back in Berkeley for two or three months--I said, "Let's go for a ride and talk about this. It can't go on." So we went up toward Crockett where the bridge crosses the Carquinez Strait to Vallejo. We were in a 1931 Ford roadster. I got up there and I said, "Ruth, you see that telephone pole ahead of us on the side of the road?" She said, "Yes." I said, "All right. I am going to head for that pole, and I'm going to put the throttle on the floor, and if you don't agree to marry me, we're going to go together."

I hit the throttle and off we went for the telephone pole, and of course before we got there she screamed and said, "All right, all right, anything! Don't do that." So we drove back to Berkeley. My mother rented a plane for Reno. We chartered a plane at Oakland Airport because I was only nineteen, and I had to have her as a witness to make everything legal.

It was at night, and we flew up over the Sierra to Reno, and when we got to Reno, there was no sign of any airport. This is 1933 and we were in a dinky little plane with fabric fuselage and wings. The pilot was confused and went down and started to circle where he thought the airport was, and we were getting a little nervous. Then he went down and sort of started to land one place, but instead of the airport it turned out to be the railroad freight yard at Sparks.

But then, all of a sudden after we had climbed up again, the lights did turn on at the airport. The guy in the control tower had finally heard our motor. They did have a control tower. But anyway, they turned the lights on, so we landed in Reno and stayed at the hotel across from the Mapes, the Riverside, I think it was. Next morning at about 10:30 we were married by the Reverend Brewster Adams, who was one of the marrying parsons at Reno. Some cousins of mine who had eloped told me to look him up.

Monday morning right after the ceremony we got in the plane and flew back to Oakland with a friend of mine, Harry Johnson. Harry and my brother Hall had driven overnight across the Sierras to be at the wedding. I remember I had two mid-terms that same afternoon: one was in Chinese history and God knows what the other one was. I got very good grades in both of them, so Ruth has been angry with me ever since. Anyway, that was the beginning of our married life.

Riess: You mean you should have been more distracted by the event?

Newhall: She said I shouldn't have been able to get to the classes, let alone make even a "C" grade. That's the way it happened.

Riess: And you knew you had to marry Ruth when you were nineteen.

Newhall: I certainly did. It's the best thing I ever did. I wouldn't let her get away again either, not yet. I think she probably has wanted to many times. We've had a few words every now and then.

Riess: You couldn't have done that in Berkeley because of your age?

Newhall: I was nineteen. You had to be twenty-one in California to contract a legal marriage, and you had to wait three days, I think, and I wasn't going to wait for any three days or three weeks or whatever the hell it was. I just wasn't going to. I wanted to get married and get it over with because this had been a very divisive and distracting affair really. Ruth's parents wouldn't speak to her for three years. Actually it's the best thing that happened to us. I think she will agree to that too. Because we had a lot of rocky times. I had been drinking and all that. Then it was after about a year of marriage I had to get straightened out, or it would have all collapsed.

Riess: Did you have an apartment?

Newhall: We got an apartment. I think we spent our honeymoon with my mother. I was a student. Ruth was working. She had a $100 salary a month, but I had no salary, so my mother provided $50 a month which rented a little apartment down there on LeConte or LeRoy down there by North Gate. We lived there for a year. Then we moved up the hill right below Sam Hume's castle. I don't know if you know this; it's up on La Loma, on Buena Vista--right up there somewhere. We rented a little place owned by Jaime d'Angulo. Do you know about Jaime?

Riess: Well, I know about his writings.

Newhall: It was this funny little house built by Maybeck, right above the Boyntons temple there. You know that Greek temple up there?

Riess: The Temple of the Winds.

Newhall: We lived there.

Candid Photographer for the Chronicle

Newhall: Then, hurrying through it all, I went back to school my junior year, but I got a job then at the Chronicle. I was such a lousy artist in a sense that I started taking up photography. That summer Ruth went to work for Henry Hart who had been teaching Oriental art at Cal. She got a sales job in his antique store.

The summer between the junior and senior years--this would get me up to about '35--I felt I had to have a job, so I tried to get a job as an artist on the Examiner. Bill Wren was then the managing editor, and he wouldn't have any part of me even though a friend of my mother's had given me a letter to go and see him. That was Bert Coblentz, a doctor, and his brother was publisher of the Call-Bulletin. He gave Wren a letter saying, "Take this young man. He needs a job." This was the bottom of the Depression. Anyway, Wren said, "No."

I decided then and there forever that the Examiner was doomed, and I went up the street, and oddly enough, I got a job at the Chronicle. I walked in with my camera, unannounced. The city editor was a fellow called Jack Robinson, and Bill Chandler was managing editor, and they knew my father and the family I guess.

I forgot to mention, by the way, when I went to work at the Coffin-Redington wholesale pharmaceutical house, Mr. Coffin asked me not to use my real name. So I worked there for about eight months under the name of Douglas Scott because, apparently they didn't want anybody to think that they were playing favorites or giving jobs to their friends or something. I was Douglas Scott for seven months, a hell of a name!

When I started on the Chronicle, I had this little camera. I got it from a cousin of mine, a Kolibri or something.* It was a little candid camera, and this is when the phrase "candid camera" was new and just coming in. I told the city editor (and I was terrified at the time) but I said, "Look, this is a candid camera; this is the new wave." He said, "Yes, we've never tried that. We'll try it."

I'd never developed a picture! I didn't know anything about photography.

Albert Bender, an old gentleman boulevardier around town, an art connoisseur and a great friend--you've probably run across his name--he was a friend of Henry Hart's. I went running up to tell Ruth I had the job, and Albert Bender came in. I was this young punk about twenty at that time. I said, "Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do, I don't know how to make a picture."

He went down to Newbegin's Bookstore and brought me back a present for my career, a book by Ansel Adams called How to Make a Photograph, and it told how you go and develop the film. Of course Ansel Adams wouldn't tell his readers how to shoot a prize-

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*Kolibri, made by Zeiss-Ikon, was manufactured between 1930-35, in Germany. See Appendices for an expanded version of this story.

winning photo of Half Dome in Yosemite winter, but he did explain how to develop the film. I read the book that night, and I started right away, the next morning.

The city editor said, "Look, Johnnie Weissmuller is here in town, and he and "Lupe"--Lupe Velez, his on-again, off-again wife--are having a terrible fight, and they're holed up in the Alexander Hamilton Hotel, and nobody can get to them. Go up and make a picture with your candid camera."

Well, that's the beginning of my journalistic career--whatever that has been. I went up to the Alexander Hamilton, by O'Farrell and Taylor, in there somewhere. I said to the doorman or bell captain, "I understand Johnnie Weissmuller is in there." He said, "But nobody can speak to him." I said, "Well, gee, look"--I gave him a line about it--"I just got a job, and I've got to get a picture of him."

He said, "I'll tell you what. You go over and you sit there, and when I see him coming down I'll tip you off because they absolutely don't want to see anybody. It's up to you from then on." So pretty soon down they came and here was this Lupe with the flashing eyes and big Johnnie Weissmuller. I went up, and I guess I looked kind of helpless, and he said, "Okay." So they went and stood by the mailbox outside, and I made a whole bunch of pictures with this little camera, and I thanked them, and that was fine.

I went back. Well, of course, the pictures were terrible. They were sort of out of focus and they were really not very good, but I didn't know what to do. So I brought them out--I developed them--to the city editor. I said, "Gee, you are not going to like these much because they are candid, you know. It is not any of this posed stuff." They were kind of fuzzy.

He said, "That's right! They've got a real feeling abut them, don't they?" [laughter] So he used them, and then I was a photographer for a year for the Chronicle.

Psychotherapy

Riess: Not to stick a big pin in the middle of the story, but were you through with your therapy?

Newhall: Yes. I was through with the therapy. Thank God. I might as well get some of that on the record. The doctor's name was Kenneth Francis. He was a practitioner here in San Francisco. My drinking in a sense got so bad, he said, "Look, you have got to separate from Ruth. You go live somewhere else." So I got a room in the YMCA

hotel down on the San Francisco waterfront. She stayed home.

I was painting. I was painting a big picture of a nude woman for the Zeta Psi chapter house. I had it up there in my room, using the wash basin for an easel, and I'd paint away. It was horrible. I had this little rotten room, and they had a Foster's restaurant down below on the ground floor.

Anyway that went on for quite a few months. I went to see Dr. Francis every day, five days a week. After all is said and done, I can't remember what the conversations were, except that the only thing I learned was that the only person you've got to blame is yourself, and the only person you have to satisfy is yourself, and not your mother and your father. It was that kind of basic deal according to the gospel of Dr. Francis.

Pretty soon I went back home for awhile, and then I moved back. Basically I never drank again after I was through. It took about probably six to eight months. I really don't remember. It seemed like a long time.

Hazards of Being a Newspaper Photographer

Riess: There's a picture in the article that you gave me by John Luce in San Francisco Magazine. It shows you with a blackened eye, one eye swollen shut. What's that picture from?

Newhall: Oh, that was from when I was a photographer. I became a very professional photographer. I had to get one of these Speed Graphic cameras. We had flash powder at first, but then in came tin foil flash bulbs, and now of course it's all different.

I just covered everything in town, and there was a cave-in down by the elephant cages out at the Fleishhacker Zoo. This was in the old Depression public works WPA days. People were very sensitive in those days, the Depression was roaring along, and this was 1935. I went out to cover this zoo cave-in and get some pictures, and the WPA people had put up a picket line around the Fleishhacker entrance. So they wouldn't let us in.

The fire chief came by, and he said, "You got a problem, boys?" There were two or three of us there. I said, "Oh, these fellows don't want to let us in." He said, "Here, hop on, and I'll take you in." So we jumped on the running board of his car--or I did anyway --and we started through, but a big fellow reached up and pulled me off. He just went wham! I've never won a fight. I have had three fights in my life, and I ended up a bloody pulp after every one of them. I will never fight again if I can help it.

He really let me have it--right across the eye here. The picture of the fight is still extant. One of the other photographers made it as the man was just hitting me, and my camera is halfway from my hand to the ground. I'm dropping it. And he opened up my eye a little bit.

Our publisher and editor decided that they were going to make a case out of this. They were going to sue the WPA or whomever you sued. It went to trial. The man who hit me was named Frank Foppiano. He was a big guy. His attorney was one of these old-time slaughterhouse Hall of Justice criminal attorneys. His son, also an attorney, was there, and he had been at Cal when I was there, and we were kidding around a little. When things looked bad for Foppiano, the father looked at the jury and held his hand up to his chest and groaned, "Oh, just a minute, just a minute." He had a grand stand heart attack. He sort of staggered back and sat down in the back row. He said, "Don't worry, your Honor, don't delay the trial. My son can carry on. He's ready to step into my shoes."

So the son took over the case, and by golly--it was a jury trial, we demanded a jury trial because we wanted everything on our side--the jury found him totally innocent of any wrongdoing. And they had a picture of that guy punching me with my camera going down. We interviewed the jurors afterwards to ask them why did they do this. A couple of them said, "Well, look, of course the fellow was guilty, but we felt sorry for him. He was unemployed. And newspaper men deserve what they get."

There was a story in the paper about it. You can find it. That was San Francisco justice as it was practiced on Kearney Street at the old Hall of Justice!

Riess: And newspaper men "deserve what they get," huh?

Newhall: Some jurors said, "Reporters are always butting into people's business and they deserve anything they get and it was good for him." They said that.

Anyway that's the black eye for whatever it's worth.

Then following that about a month later--this would have been 1936, about April or March, in there--there was a little wreck. A Walkup truck, one of those stevedore trucks with a low flat back and stakes around the edge, had a little accident with a Southern Pacific train down at Third and Townsend tracks. I was sent out to get some pictures of the crash, which I did.

However, the truck driver took a look at me. He said, "I don't want any pictures." He walked over and grabbed one of those stakes. (They were about four or five feet long.) He pulled it out of his

truck and came after me. He never caught me, that fellow. Well, I ran, literally, all the way back to the Chronicle. I turned in my time and my camera. I said, "Look, this business is getting too tough for me." I said, "I'm through as a photographer."

Well, about that time we were ready to make a trip around the world, and we bought a sailboat and so on. So that was the end of my first year at the Chronicle.

I've always respected the work that a photographer does. It is the toughest job there is on a newspaper, no matter what any reporter will tell you, because a writer can always fake a story and cover up and write it later from notes or get a fill-in briefing from someone else. If you go to cover a story with a camera, you have to get the picture right then. You can't go back to the office and call up somebody and say, "Hey, make a picture for me."

Writers, when they're sent out on a story, the reporters never got heart attacks much. They'd go along and take it easy. We all do that. You can write your stories from a barroom, but you can't make your pictures from a barroom. I just mention that in passing.

WPA, Artists and Doctrinairians

Riess: Speaking of the WPA, did you meet Diego Rivera when he was here?

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Newhall: The WPA art down here at the Maritime Museum building has those marvelous murals in it. I was mentioning Tony [Antonio] Sotomayor . I don't know if he ever did any work for WPA, but he did a huge big beautiful fountain for the 1939 World's Fair at Treasure Island. Then there were the Coit Tower murals and Rincon Annex.

I don't recall that I ever met Rivera, but I met a lot of people who knew him. That was all very much a part of our scene.

Riess: Emmy Lou Packard?

Newhall: Emmy Lou was a very dear friend of mine, and Amelia Perle. Emmy Lou is still around, isn't she? Hasn't she done some writing? Somebody called Emmy Lou is doing it. She had a mother called Emmy Lou, too, didn't she? [Emma Packard] I read an article about her in one of the California historical magazines.

She was a classmate of mine, or maybe a class ahead of me at Cal. Or two classes. It was quite a group there. We used to come over to San Francisco and suit up for the annual Parilia. This was

the big artists' ball every year in San Francisco. There was a group of us that would get into costume and join these pageants and stuff. The big meeting place was the Varsity Restaurant, a block from Sather Gate at the corner of Bancroft and Telegraph. We used to go down there a lot and sit around and talk, drinking coffee until quite late. We were all very sophisticated.

Riess: Artists and philosophers, all of you?

Newhall: Yeah, knew all sorts of things about what was the best, and we were all pretty liberal. I just objected to the ones that were a little too far over. I use the word "doctrinaire"--the ones who never would think. They would just parrot their social philosophy abut how to save the world. That bored me.

Riess: In some way or other you have been saying that old values are the best values. Restoration I know is an important theme in your life. Can you be a liberal at the same time?

Newhall: Well, when I'm with my old colleagues and friends from San Rafael, I'm a flaming radical. And when I'm with the Student Problems Club, I'm a reactionary. That's the nature of the beast. I feel that there always has to be a middle ground, or at least another version. The philosophy of the world can never be capsulized into one simple capsule or flavor. You can't.

Look, I suffer a lot of dichotomy or whatever it is. A person who has been born--we were discussing it a little bit--into a certain comfortable social situation, can take his security for granted. From there it's easy to divert yourself and go in other directions and assume other roles. If you have that sort of security anchor to windward all your life--I don't express it very well--it's easy to assume certain poses with whomever I'm with, the "mucker pose," or whatever you want to call it.

If you are born with a certain stability somewhere in your background, even after the Depression, or during the Depression, you can probably have a safe psychological "home base" in your soul. So then it's easy to be the liberal. You can see this kind of role-playing in a lot of your politicians.

What kind of a liberal was Nelson Rockefeller? He was a pretty good friend of mine, but it was the same deal. It was very easy to be a liberal just as long as he controlled a good percentage of the nation's wealth. Of course I didn't control any of it.

Admiration for Asians

Riess: When you were at Cal, did you develop friends who were blacks or Asians?

Newhall: Oh, sure. I was very pro-black and Asian. I almost made a point of it. As I say, Kimio Obata was about as close a friend as I had. There was this very nice black guy in the class who became, I think, a very successful practicing artist. I was trying to think of his name the other night. Women too. I was very unselfconscious then about all this business. I have always been very partial, believe me, to our friends in the Oriental group, because I figure they are going to own the world anyway. The first time I went to China, I said, "Oh, my God!" They are. They about own San Francisco now. They're fantastic. It's amazing.

Riess: What was it that you saw in China that so amazed you?

Newhall: I can't explain it. I think patience and hard work. In China--now this was before the so-called mainland or Communist Chinese took over; I was there when the "Communist" armies under Mao and Chou were besieging all the major cities. I'm jumping way ahead now. The absolute thrust of world history is over there on the Chinese and Southeast Asian mainland.

In 1948 and 1949, when I was there, the Chinese merchants or salesmen would come in and say, "Master (it was then), don't you want to buy some clothes or bring something home? Some dresses for your wife?" I said, "Well, I'm leaving on the nine o'clock plane tomorrow." "Okay, Master, we will have them for you." They made for Ruth a whole trousseau of pajamas and nightgowns and blouses from about six o'clock at night until about seven in the morning, and they brought them there to the Wagon Lits Hotel in Peking in plenty of time. [See discussion on p. 110]

The work that they will perform with such privation is something we cannot conceive of in this country, I think. This is something you don't realize unless you've seen it. And the Chinese are going through this amazing "Westernizing" period now. But maybe--I don't want to get depressed now--maybe Western culture will somehow debauch them. They are going through this "Western" metamorphisis very fast-maybe too fast.

Riess: Kill it off.

Newhall: That's right, it may very well. [laughter] But I tell you they are fantastic people.

Dolly's family [Dolly Rhee, Newhall's secretary]--they came over from Korea. I think her mother and father were very well

connected. They had to get out of reach of the old Korean royal court. Anyway, Dolly's father came over here. Her mother came over separately. It was an arranged marriage. They went out into the San Joaquin Valley, and Mr. Rhee cornered the rice market after working night and day. That collapsed; they went broke; they lived on fish heads; they started a Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles.

They managed to send their kids, all three of them, through college. Dolly went on to get a master's in English Literature in another college, and I don't know any other people who can do this at such a regular pace. This is the story of all East Asia. It's amazing. Dolly's brother Sammy Lee is a well known world champion athlete. He has won two Olympic gold medals for diving. He became a physician, has represented our American government and the White House many times as a ambassador of good will. [For more on Dolly Rhee see pp. 403-405.]

IV MEXICO

1934 Travels

Riess: In 1934 you decided to take a trip. You thought that your life was not really going in a direction that made any sense yet?

Newhall: Well, my father had left me what amounted to about $10,000 in securities, one thing or another. My great fantasy, and Ruth's--or at least she went along with it--was to travel this whole great, wide wonderful world. This fantasy of romance, the Indiana Jones bit, I loved it. (This was very, very pre-Indiana Jones incidentally.)

We went to Mexico first for a year. That opened up a whole world there. This was before I went to work for the Chronicle, 1934 it was, the first summer after we were married. Mexico was a faraway place with a strange sounding name. There was no true highway or road to Mexico City, but they'd just started building the so-called Pan American Highway, and I wanted to be out there in the great untamed frontier.

We had been saving money. Our life style was very parsimonious then. Our Model T Ford roadster had cost us only $12.50. We saved on our food bills. We put thirty one-dollar bills in the top drawer of the bureau each month, and we would take a dollar bill out every day to buy our day's food supply down at the market. So we were able to save enough for a summer trip through Mexico.

We had two or three, four hundred dollars maybe, and I bought a baby Austin. Those were the tiny little American ones. I don't know whether you have ever seen one or not, but they were really small. I thought, well, if we get struck in the jungle or whatever it is, we can push it out.

So we started off for Mexico. I tried to get a map. The man at the AAA said, "If you're going to take your wife to Mexico, I'm going to call the police." This place, Mexico, was just finishing

up its early 1900 revolutions, and they were bloody. So we went on to Texas in the Austin and went down what was to become in a few years the Pan-American Highway from Laredo through Monterrey and finally up over the mountains into Mexico City.

I had a cousin in Mexico City who had been very successful. He was a cousin of my mother's--Teddy Finley his name was. He was a great friend of Bill Holt who was the Caterpillar Tractor family. They were fraternity brothers from an earlier class in the Zete house in Berkeley. Teddy was older than I by about ten, twelve, fifteen years. But he had been very successful down there. He had the Caterpillar agency for the whole of Mexico, and Mexico was just recovering from these terrible revolutions and starting to mechanize their agriculture a little bit. The revolutionary governments had broken up all the haciendas and the churches.

So Ruth and I went down to see Teddy. We lived the high life there because the Foreign Club, which was a big gambling establishment, had just opened in Mexico City out toward Chapultepec. Ruth and I had developed a system to beat the roulette wheel. We hit it. We were paid off in pesos, but we had thousands of pesos. We used the simple system of just doubling up on bets on the "red" or "black." You had to go in there with a dinner jacket; I rented a dinner jacket down there. The last time we went in--it was too much for my heart--she kept doubling up and the wrong colors kept coming up, until finally we were wiped out one night.

We had hired a car and a chauffeur and were living at the Churubusco country club. Here we were broke! But we were kids. So I borrowed $100 from Teddy the next morning, after our great loss at the Foreign Club, and we started north. Well, there were no genuine roads going north to Guadalajara. It was the rainy season. We went over to Queretaro and through Irapuato. These towns are up --I don't know if you know Mexico--on the plateau country where Emperor Maximilian was finally wiped out by the native troops. Then we bogged down in the mud--no roads, no nothing.

This country, believe me it's not the Mexico you think of now, I promise you--(I was going to do a book on it)--it was unbelievable. There wasn't a priest in the country; there wasn't a church that hadn't been ruined. It was just getting over the revolutions. They'd just thrown General Plutaro Elias Calles out. (I interviewed him later.) There were still generals in charge of the country. Abelardo Rodriguez had been president and Lazaro Cardenas was now in the saddle.

The roads were so terrible and there was so much rain that we would sink into lanes running through the cornfields. So we'd have to hire these oxen to pull us out. One bunch of rancheros there wanted to buy Ruth. I said: "No, I can't sell her, she's my wife." They looked at her gold wedding ring and said: "Well, what about

that ring?" I said: "Oh, no, come on. That means that she belongs to me." They said, "Well, okay, but come and have something to eat with us," which we did. This is a funny country.

I was able to trade the little baby Austin to the station master in a flag stop town. He had about seven children, and he thought he could make money if he could get the little car to Guadalajara in the dry season. I was able to trade the Austin for two train tickets to the Arizona border, to Nogales, plus about one hundred pesos. The peso was about an exchange of three or four to one.

We got on the train and went to Guadalajara and stayed at a hotel there. We got a cab, and asked the driver, "Where can we get some horses?" Between the city of Guaralajara and the town of Tepic there is this huge barranca. The train then--it was a Southern Pacific line--had a track going across the tremendous gorge. But I thought, well, we should make this a personal trip down to the bottom through the jungle ravine. And we would have to make the trip on horseback.

So we went out to the fair. Every Sunday they sell horses and buy them at these markets. We bought a couple of horses--about seventy pesos apiece with bridles and saddles and everything. And the next morning we started out for Tepic, which turned out to be an eight-day ride. We rode over the countryside and down into the barranca, which is one of the most amazing places--huge barranca. I forget the name of it--Grande Barranca--and up over. We went through the towns. We'd make a day's ride and stop in little towns.

The last night out we stopped at what must have been the last, true hacienda in Mexico. The patron came riding up with his spurs, and his foreman jumped down and took his spurs off when he dismounted. He was a huge man with a white beard, very polite and humorous and very regal. He was a real Gachupin--a Spaniard. He said, "My house is yours," and so we came in and stayed with him. He told us about a daughter at UCLA and this, that and the other. Don Eduardo Varela--I'll never forget him.

The next morning off we went to Tepic. We sold the horses in Tepic and lost some money in the Nayarit lottery. Then we still had our tickets to the coast so we headed up in the third class train, stopped for a night or two in Mazatlan, came on up to Nogales, and crossed the border and came home in a Greyhound bus.

We had eleven cents in our jeans when we got home. So that was that story. It covers a lot of terrain, but this was the beginning of our wandering or traveling mostly in Latin America for the rest of our lives. This was before we started out again on the boat, a year later, in 1936.

Riess: That's a real not-to-worry style of doing things that's pretty remarkable.

Newhall: Well, you know the world is a wonderful place, and it's been so screwed-up and damaged and over-ridden now. I don't even like to travel much because all you do is travel between the Holiday Inn in San Francisco and Holiday Inn in Singapore, with perhaps a quick stopover at the Sheraton Shinto, or something-or-other, in Okinawa. There is this horrible sameness about the places. It's hard. The last trip we made around the world a couple of years ago we finally got up into some parts of Nepal and Ceylon among others. And the slick new hotels are there also. It's so crowded; it's so different now.

Look at Central America. Where is the mystery? The mystery is where are the next contingent of American troops landing!

Riess: You said somewhere that Mexico was full of real ladies and gentlemen.

Newhall: We have been in Mexico a great deal, and there is this fantastic old-world, colonial sense of hospitality, graciousness there. Or at least it used to be that way. There is a chivalrous echo still to be heard in Latin America. We'd be out--and when I say "out in the country," I mean out in the country where the only thing there in a so-called town would be one adobe hut with a fellow with his family and his kids and a few corn stalks and beans.

He'd come out, "Welcome. Be my guest." You'd say, you know, "Don Eduardo, how are you today?" You'd think that you were in the court of Spain for God's sake. These are sort of semi-Indians out in the country. It's an amazing place. It was. Now there is this tremendous Mexican middle class, of course, that has grown up there. There wasn't any then.

Decision to Leave School

Riess: So then you came back.

Newhall: I came back to work for the Chronicle. I'm sure that was it. In my senior year--I couldn't finish it, I couldn't do the job and school at the same time--I sort of quit Cal. I never got a diploma.

Riess: Didn't Ruth push you to get that diploma?

Newhall: What good does it do?

Riess: To push you?

Newhall: No, to get a diploma.

You know, it's not really necessary. Everyone I'm sure thinks I have a dozen diplomas. That doesn't make any point one way or another. I learned so much, and Cal was so great, believe me. I might even have enough units to graduate. I don't know. I quit in the middle of my last year. I probably had a couple of prerequisites I had to do, some American thing you have to study. I didn't care. Nobody has ever asked me to produce a diploma in my life, and I went over to teach at Cal later on, as an instructor, not as a tenured professor.

Riess: Anyway, you decided that you could forego the degree?

Newhall: I had to make a choice. The degree or the job. The job meant a great deal more to me. It's as simple as that.

Riess: It sounds like you were more of a grown-up. You were married.

Newhall: I don't know if anybody ever grows up.

Riess: Married usually means responsibilities and taking care of the wife and homemaking.

Newhall: She was working. She was kind of liberated then. We had our own contributions to make. I will never forget Ruth's being willing to go along on these hare-brained adventures, but she always did.

Outfitting Another New Adventure

Riess: So you had money, and you bought a boat?

Newhall: Yes. We bought this old boat--a 42-foot ketch. My family had had some yachts in the bay and so on. I have always liked ships. You will see I make occasional remarks that there were "old ships" tied up here or there. My father used to take us up to the Sacramento Fair and on San Joaquin River. He'd charter a boat. He had his own boat which he laid up, and my grandfather had quite a nice yacht here in the bay. The family had always sort of fooled around in the water.

When I was up in Alaska with the Whites I learned to love the water even more. Another story I read while I was up with the Whites was Around the World, which was about a single man going around the world in a small sailboat.

Riess: Joshua Slocum?

Newhall: It wasn't Slocum actually. It was a fellow called Robinson. He did it later, but I read Slocum's book too.

So I thought well, we're going to get this old sailing yacht; we're going to go around the world; we're going to write articles; and we're going to see the world. So we bought the boat, provisioned it for a few months, and we brought two young teenagers along as far as San Pedro and then sent one of them back because we had learned enough to run the boat. The other came as far as Manzanillo with us, and then he went home.

We left with provisions for about six months, and I think again it was fourteen cents in our pockets, literally. We figured we could either find our food or fish or shoot or earn some money.

Riess: There was some commitment to write?

Newhall: The Chronicle said they'd buy articles--twenty-five dollars an article. Well, twenty-five dollars is enough to live a month in Mexico! I wrote quite a few, or Ruth did.

We sailed from here down to San Pedro, and then from there we ran aground halfway down lower California in a little lagoon. We finally managed to haul her off with an anchor and a windlass. I thought the trip might have ended there. It was a hell of an experience--but I suppose exactly what we were looking for.

Went into Mazatlan for awhile. And then on the voyage to Manzanillo we became storm-bound for a month. We couldn't go south because the wind was blowing against us for about twenty-nine days. We couldn't go to windward at all. Then we got into Manzanillo which was a marvelous stage-set kind of tropical seaport then. There were none of these tourist hotels or anything like that.

Going Inland from Manzanillo

Newhall: Again, this was summer and the rainy season. The port captain in Manzanillo--this was a small sleepy town--said, "Look, I'm not going to let you clear until after the rainy season because it's too dangerous." They have some pretty good blows down there in the rainy season.

So once again, an old Mexican fellow, a story teller came wandering by the plaza one night and saw us there, and he said, "You two gringos, I'm going to tell you a story. There is a sacred mountain down there in the jungle, down there in Michoacan. It's got a lot of big stone idols. People are afraid of it; it's

So what happens? Our eyes became the size of saucers. We joined up with him. We tied up the boat and left a young man in charge of it. Went up to Colima, a town that had been pretty much destroyed by earthquakes, but a wonderful old colonial town. We bought three horses and off we started through the mountains of Michoacan with a shotgun, fifty shells, and, I think, seven dollars in my pocket. Off we went.

It was two months before we got back. This was really the outback of Michoacan. We were riding through the mountains and jungle during the rainy season. Mail, if it ever arrived out there in the hills, took six days by muleback. Of course, we never did get to this so-called enchanted mountain because things got a little tough and hungry. We began to lose weight. Oh my God, it was awful!

Riess: But this guy was still with you?

Newhall: Oh, he was to be our guide. Well, it turned out that as a guide he wasn't all that really sharp, but he was a great story teller. He was about seventy-two then, pretty old we thought, because we were in our middle twenties.

We were going up and down; it was the rainy season; the rivers were torrents; we'd swim the rivers and haul the horses and kick them and sometimes sleep out in the rain. This was really, as they would say now, roughing it. I would shoot an occasional dove or a quail or a chachalaca, which is a wild chicken, and sometimes we'd trade them for eggs or beans. We were hungry.

The biggest thing of that trip in the end was to go through an experience of total hunger and malnourishment. Unless you have a real season of starvation, you cannot understand people who, when they are ill-fed and ill-housed, are ready to kill. We would dream of food at night. We were hungry. Because, while the countryside was jungle and there was enough growing in a sense, and in a while you might pass an avocado tree or something, the people had no food. This country was still just torn apart following the revolution.

Riess: Why didn't you turn back?

Newhall: Well, there's always the next mountain. We finally just ran out of time and started to head down to the coast. We had more or less been paralleling the coast through the mountains. Then we went over and down to the coast and ran into a miner, a Texan who was running a gold mine there. This was near a little pueblo called Arteaga. They'd hit a big bonanza proving out at about $90,000 a ton, which is high grade ore and a lot of money.

But the local Indians--and I cannot stress this too much, this

But the local Indians--and I cannot stress this too much, this was a very violent country, except that people were marvelous to us, they took care of us--the local gentry had been stealing, and so the Texas miner hired the bandidos to protect him. And that was the state of affairs when we were there. The mine shack had sheet iron, boiler plate, all up around the place so that the owner could hide if they began to shoot.

The head bandido also had come from an old, old hacienda family. His name was Zefarino Guzman, and he was about twenty-eight years old. He had a record of eighteen violent killings. There had been an awful lot of trouble in this area, and I'm not exaggerating in the slightest. The whole scene was exactly like "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," although I hadn't seen that particular movie yet.

We started out toward the coast from this mine and Zefarino said, "Look, you've got to go see my mother. She hasn't seen me for a long time because I have not been able to appear in public." So we rode, as his "guest" almost, through the countryside for two or three days till we got to Ahuindo, the hacienda, and saw his mother.

We rode armed, by the way--the first trip on horseback too. I had a pistol and machetes. Everybody did. I didn't really know how to use the pistol. I dropped mine once. It fell out of the holster somehow on that ride through the jungle. Two days later this little fellow came plodding along and said, "Don Zefarino said to give you this. I found it lying on your trail."

Then we got down to the coast and started to ride and hike back along the beaches. You go up the beach until you come to the next river, and you then go inland to a point where you can find a roaring ford on the river. Sometimes you'd be stuck for a day or two. It was slow going, slow going. We were walking. Pretty soon the poor old horses got so thin and tired we were behind them pushing them.

Sometimes there would be an Indian town here and mestizo town there. That was the way it stacked up sociologically. We got into one town, and local folk were having one of their feuds. The big man in the town had the biggest house, I guess, which was about two rooms. I remember how we were so hungry at this place--Coire it is called, for whatever it's worth--and a fellow had a branch of bananas on his back. You know how bananas grow, a whole branch of them, and they were for sale. Usually you were able to buy a banana somewhere. We bought the entire branch. Before we got off our horses, we ate the whole thing. The three of us ate a whole clump of bananas. I have never eaten so much in my life.

Hunger in the Corn Patch##

Newhall: I just want to pause enough to try and give you the enchantment of it all. The rivers that we crossed--we would get sticks or stones, and you'd see these sort of floating logs in the stream, and you'd throw the stick at them because they were alligators usually--to scare them away so you could cross. This was living to me. Oh, man, that's it! [laughter]

Riess: You sent back stories about all this?

Newhall: Some. People'd think you were kidding. [laughter] We'd go through these swamps up to here, and you didn't know what was going on. It was truly very primitive, truly. The people again were so hospitable.

We were stuck at a flooding river one time. The household at which we stayed was the only shack we had seen all afteroon, and it might have been totally as large as most of this room. It was a few poles under a thatch roof. The mother was running it. I don't know if there was a father around or not. There were four or five young kids. She must have been all of thirty. She was wonderful. They had a little corn patch across the river. So while we waited there, she would go across the flooding river once or twice a day and bring in corn, and all we had to eat was just this corn. It was very good, of course. But we couldn't eat all of it because you'd try to let other people have some corn too.

Egg was the delicacy. The beans were even difficult to come by. People were living in thatched huts, and the pigs lived there too. Ruth and I amused ourselves one night by pushing with our feet on different pigs. They had a different pitch, you see, each one of them, and they'd grunt. [laughter] We sort of kept ourselves busy with a melodious evening.

I mentioned the town we'd come into where they had this feud, and the people were killing each other. They'd lock the town at night, so you were locked in, you couldn't even get out of the hut. The day before, we were coming over a hill and we suddenly ran onto a corn field coming down toward the river. It was very hilly, with rivers going down to the ocean. Another hill, another river. So I picked a few ears of corn which I probably shouldn't have done, but I did.

The horses--and they were sick and hungry by that time too --stopped to eat and I became very angry with my mare and I gave her a kick to move her along. She hauled off and kicked me in the shin. I'd never had such a kick before, and I thought, "My God, she's broken my leg", but it wasn't broken. It hurt, but I went on. That night, halfway down the hill, we ran across the fellow who was in

charge of the corn field. The farmer would come out at night in those areas--we used to call them corn herders--because the little coatis or raccoons roamed around at night and ate the corn. So every hour or two, our farmer host would let out a hell of a yell and a bellow and beat a pan to scare the animals away.

We stayed with him, he had kind of a lean-to, and then we went on to this town with the bananas that I mentioned. From there we decided to go down to the coast because we knew that we were close to a lighthouse, a place called Punta San Telmo. My leg had really begun hurting me quite a bit. So we went down the coast. We got a boy from a hill village to guide us because we were getting down into dense growth.

Toward nightfall our young guide suddenly remembered he had a wedding reception he had to go to somewhere, so he started away over the hill. I said, "Well, I won't let you go until you get somebody else." Then he found somebody. But our new guide suddenly remembered there were tigers--they used that name for mountain lions or ocelots--in the brush. And he left. So we camped that night. This was our last night on horseback. We were about ten or fifteen miles from San Telmo.

Desperate Days

Newhall: I was being very protective. We were at the site of a beautiful stream, really--a sandy beach, and the stream--and a couple of lemons came floating down and we made lemonade. We had some sugar cane. I thought, Ruth has been so gallant and she's so tired and our feet were so wet from all these rivers and stuff, I'd put her boots there by the fire to dry, and of course, the boots burned up because we fell asleep. So Ruth was left barefoot.

We literally had only the clothes we had on our backs. I had boots on, but the soles were gone. The tops looked pretty good. And so that's the way we ended up. We went on down and finally got to this lighthouse, a plaster or stucco place, kind of colonial. We rode into the courtyard, and there was the lighthouse keeper there, and his assistant, and the lighthouse keeper's son, and this very pregnant Indian girl.

Ruth was on the horse. I said, "You ride the horse." We had sold one horse and Antonio, our original guide, headed back to Manzanillo with the other. We couldn't even ride them. They were bones--poor animals. Ruth burst into tears. It had been a long, hard trip, about five weeks, I guess. We were really, really, really tired. I guess she probably lost about ten or twenty pounds. I know I was down from about 150 to 120 pounds.

So the lighthouse keeper said, "Come in, we'll take care of you. The ship will be here. It's due now, but it probably won't be here for a week." So we lived with them. They gave us a little room with some slats. It was very nice.

My leg had broken out into quite a nasty infection which turned out in the end, of course, to be osteomyelitis. It just wouldn't heal. The lighthouse keeper, whom we called "Pops," said, "I'll take care of you." He kept dousing my leg with hot water, and I think he had some permanganate or something.

The interesting part of that was that all that he and his helper had to do was tend this light because this is a very major light on the Mexican coast. Well, the assistant lighthouse keeper, a handsome young man, had had an affair with this young Indian girl. There was another fellow sitting on the verandah of the lighthouse, all the time polishing his pistol, his revolver, and so

I asked, "Who's this fellow?" He was the brother of the pregnant Indian girl, and she was a local native. Pops said, "He has sworn, unless they are married, he is going to kill my assistant." I said, "Well, why is he sitting there polishing his gun?" He said, "Oh, he can't kill him as long as he's a guest in my home. No problem."

The whole time we were there, this fellow sat around. He ate by himself, but he sat around cleaning his pistol. The girl, of course, waited on the table--whatever the table was. They slaughtered a cow while we were there so we all had meat to eat and chicharones and stuff like that. What we ate mostly was this dried salt meat, a heavy tough jerky.

These Mexican guys had big strong teeth and they could eat it so fast. They put a bowl of the jerky on the table. Ruth and I would sit there almost in tears watching all the meat disappear while we were still chewing our first mouthful. You are out of your mind, believe me, when you go hungry for a couple of months. So we developed a technique where while our hosts weren't looking or eating or something, we would grab a piece and let it drop in our laps. Then we'd go back and get another piece. Then at night we would lie in the bed there and gnaw on the beef that we had been able to pirate.

It was really quite an experience, and I'm sorry that every single one of our affluent American fellow citizens cannot experience it--what true poverty or hunger or malnutrition means. I can never forget what I went through there.

The boat finally came by and picked us up and brought us back to Manzanillo. To give an idea again of what this food problem does

The boat finally came by and picked us up and brought us back to Manzanillo. To give an idea again of what this food problem does and hardship does: There had been a Chinese fellow's restaurant in Manzanillo and he had fed us for a peso and a quarter a day--breakfast, lunch and dinner--everything, very good. And when we came back, he came to our hotel and brought a banana pie. Well, we'd eaten a full meal, full breakfast, full lunch, full dinner. He gave us the pie. We sat down on the bed and ate the whole pie.

My mother then came down. She'd heard we'd been having some problems, and she hadn't had her stroke yet. She brought us a lot of jam because she had written and said, "What do you want?" I said something sweet, jam or jelly.

We all went up to Guadalajara, which is a day's train ride from Manzanillo, and stayed at the Hotel Frances, a little colonial hotel. There in those countries they used to serve you your vegetables and vegetable dishes on platters family style. They bring it in, you help yourselves, then they'll take it away when you're finished. Well, Ruth and I would eat, and they would come and take the vegetable dishes away before they were clean, bare empty. We didn't dare say, "Gee, we'd like some more," because we thought that would be rude or greedy, or they would think there's something strange about us.

We were still unbalanced on the subject of food. I know Ruth once went into tears when they took the vegetable platter away too early. This was three weeks later. It took a while to get our health back.

Riess: It must have affected your thinking, too.

Newhall: I know at one time we found a big horse banana when we were out there with Antonio Renteria, who was our "guide." And instead of cutting this banana instantly into three equal pieces, I said to Ruth, "Don't you want it?" She said, "Oh, no." I said, "Antonio, wouldn't you like this?" He said, "Oh yes, I would," and the bastard took it and ate the whole thing! We didn't speak to him for a day. We never said anything. I hated him. I <u>hated</u> him! That's what starvation does to you.

<u>Staphylococcus, Septicemia, and Amputation</u>

Riess: That didn't contribute at all to your general health. If you had been healthier, do you think you would have survived the leg injury?

Newhall: I don't know. I had started to come down with a series of staphylococcus infections--they didn't know they were staphylococcus

it. It went on for years, incidentally, even after I lost my leg.

By the way, that horse' kick is basically what started my leg problem because I got this general bacterium or bacillus, whatever it is, in my blood. I think I had kind of a septicemic condition, and then when we got to Acapulco two or three months later it really broke out in this leg, and eventually I had to have it cut off.

Riess: You got back on the boat?

Newhall: Oh yes. We got back on the boat in Manzanillo--fixed the boat all up.

Riess: But you must have been in pain all that time?

Newhall: No, it sort of receded. The skin never really healed up, but it was not a great problem. It was arrested, I thought. But that must have started it all going. I still have the leg that was kicked. It was the other leg that was finally amputated. That was certainly an indication that I was no longer resistant because what I had was a total bone disease right here.

We had gone on to Acapulco. We had cleaned up the Mermaid. We'd re-rigged her to a certain extent. We probably worked on her for a month or two after getting back from the horseback trip. Then we sailed on to Acapulco. We did the Manzanillo to Acapulco run in three days--just the two of us by this time. It had taken us thirty days to go the same distance from Mazatlan to Manzanillo. We went three days down to Acapulco with a following wind, and as I dropped the anchor there, my right leg began to hurt.

I ran across an old schoolmate of mine, Lewis Riley, from the Webb School who subsequently married Bette Davis and Dolores del Rio--not at the same time, but that was afterwards. He picked me up in his fancy Cord convertible car. Acapulco when we were there was literally the bay, the Mirador Hotel up on the hill, and the rest of it was just a town. There had been a hotel down below, the Tropical. That had blown down in a hurricane.

Acapulco, then, was just a fishing village. My friend and a partner started the first real estate development down there, and they made a lot of money. The last time I saw it was when I came back in the Eppleton Hall, and oh my God, Acapulco was like Biarritz or Monte Carlo or something--worse.

Riess: Were they the people who put you in touch with the doctors?

Newhall: Yes. Lew came down, gave me a lift up to see my cousin Teddy in Mexico City. The doctors in Mexico operated and opened up my leg and sort of arrested the infection. But they said, "Look, we don't want to take your leg off down here because it may not be as bad as

we think. You better go home, because if you lose your leg down here you're always going to think, well, you could have saved it if you'd gone to San Francisco."

My mother than came to Mexico. The doctors told her to come because I wasn't going to make it. Nobody thought I was going to survive, really, because they operated on me about five times. They told Ruth, "Oh, he won't wake up tomorrow," but I did.

I will make a point of saying here and now, the reason I am alive today is that I was in Mexico when it all started. There was quite a good deal of contact between German pharmaceutical firms and Latin America. A medicine called Prontosil had just been developed. It was a red dye, and it was the first of the sulpha drugs. They would not permit it here in the United States because it hadn't been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Prontosil supposedly had a capacity for combatting staph and strep.

I was then suffering from streptococcus septicemia. The doctor in Mexico said, "Well, we don't know what to do, but we're just going to fill you full of this." They gave it to me by mouth; they gave it to me in injections. I woke up, and it arrested the terrible virulent part of it. But that whole leg episode was the most terrible pain I have ever suffered. I have never had anything like it.

And I got up here into the hands of our San Francisco society doctors, and they damn near managed to kill me. I can go into a long oration on the subject of malpractice and social ethics in the American sickroom, but anyway, I got into the hospital here in San Francisco. The doctor said, "Oh, we've got to straighten your leg out, Tiger, or you're going to have a stiff knee the rest of your life." (My leg had been kind of bent at the knee in order to ease the pain of it, and it had been in a cast. I had made the air flight from Mexico to San Francisco with the leg in a cast.)

So they put me out--boom--without any preparation for it. They straightened my leg out apparently--I didn't see it of course, I was out. But by sheer force they straightened it and then put it back in a cast. The damn fools managed to break my leg while they were straightening it. They didn't have any idea really what shape I was in. I promise you I have never, never suffered anything like that-before or after. I went down to about 100 pounds or less. I was just lying in bed. I couldn't move for about three or four weeks from the pain of it.

If somebody came into the room and happened to hit my bed, I would just start screaming. It was something fierce. The doctors let me lie there until Ruth and my mother said, "Well, we've got to do something." They got Leo Eloesser who is one of the great heroes of my life. I don't know if you've ever heard of him or met him.

do something." They got Leo Eloesser who is one of the great heroes of my life. I don't know if you've ever heard of him or met him.

Riess: Sure. In fact, I associate him with Mexico.

Newhall: We got to be old buddies. He went down to Mexico and got a little ranch there. Anyway, he agreed to take on the case. My old psychiatrist showed up. He came in and said, "Hi, how are you?" and started to shake hands, and I let out a yell. He went out and said to Ruth and my mother, "You've got to do something. This man's going to die."

They had let me lie there really, these guys. So Eloesser agreed to take over. He said, "Yes, this has got to come off." They took me down. I had not been able to turn over to reach the phone. I was immobilized in this cast. And pain. Oh, God! They took me down, and they were going to take it off, but they opened it up, and he and one of the other doctors had an argument about how much they could save of the leg.

It made a big difference if you take off a leg at the hip or down halfway to the knee. So they sent me back up again and studied some more X-rays, and the next day they took me down, and they took it off. Well, when they cut around the muscles, the leg fell off. There had been this spontaneous fracture. So it was a hell of a mess. The morning after that, when I woke up, I rolled over, I dialed Ruth, and I said, "Hey, how are you?" I was on my way back.

It's tough to get into one of those involved ethical debates as to whose patient are you, but he [Eloesser] agreed to come in to do the job. He took care of me on and off ever since, and we've been very close. He always came by to see us. I never got down to his ranch though. He loved that ranch. It was in Michoacan.

Riess: That's a grisly story at the end, isn't it?

Newhall: Well, I'm sorry, I'm telling exactly the way it went. Let me hasten to say with a big smile on my face: This, I think, is probably the luckiest thing that ever happened to me--like going broke. You lose the leg, and then you react to it in a certain way and make certain arrangements. So then you get on about your business.

V THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 1930s - 1940s

[Interview 3: April 6, 1988]##

Paul Smith

Riess: You said you had gone off with the notion that you were going to file some stories from Mexico. Did you? And was there a job waiting for you to come back to at the Chronicle?

Newhall: Well, we sent a few stories by mail, you know. But they were very few, because we would be at sea for a month or so, and come in and write a story. And they were just a little casual adventure stories or travel stories, you know. It wasn't much of anything. Of course, then I got sick and so was sent home.

But I was very fortunate--if you'd like to talk about how I got back in the paper--.

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: A very good friend of mine was a young man called Paul C. Smith, Paul Clifford Smith, who was the young boy wonder of San Francisco. He was quite a personality, quite a skyrocket around town, and a very important man in San Francisco over a period of ten or twelve years. He had come from somewhere up in the northwest. He had been hitchhiking around. He led a kind of adventuresome life.

When I first met him on the San Francisco Chronicle, I had just been hired, and he was a red-headed kid or young man who had just been appointed executive editor of the paper at the age of twenty-six. He had been a financial editor of the Chronicle. He had caught the eye of George Cameron--Uncle George as we called him--who was the Chronicle publisher. Paul Smith was also a protege of Herbert Hoover.

The Chronicle was listlessly floating along in the journalistic

doldrums. It was pretty much a right-wing conservative newspaper. Herbert Hoover was "the great white god." He was a very fine gentleman, as a matter of fact. And Uncle George,--he was the son-in-law of Mike deYoung and publisher because Mike deYoung had left no male heirs living--had appointed Paul Smith executive editor to see if he could somehow shock the Chronicle out of its lethargy and into some kind of a vital newspapering.

Riess: What is this title "executive editor?"

Newhall: Well, every newspaper has its own system of titles. There's no uniformity as you might find in a monarchy, or the peerage or anything like that. An executive editor in the case of the Chronicle is anything you made it out to be. I was executive editor many years later, and I ended up, more or less in conjunction with the then-publisher, responsible for everything the paper did.

Paul was a very dynamic young man. He was friendly, charming, brilliant. And as executive editor he promoted himself into general manager and editor-in-chief and everything else. He was called executive editor, and was in charge, to answer your question directly, of all editorial activities, including the production. I mean, from the editorial creative side of the whole newspaper. And he sort of took over the editorial page itself.

It all depends on how the executive editor operates, or how the rest of the paper is made up. Titles really have not much meaning, except in terms of the actual--oh, well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating?

Chester Rowell

Riess: Yes. And Chester Rowell was the Chronicle editor?

Newhall: Chester Rowell would have had the title "editor," and his activities were confined totally to the editorial page. He was a sort of an old-time Republican journalist who had come up from, I think, the Fresno Republican, I think that is correct. Maybe Fresno or Bakersfield, down in there somewhere.

Mr. Rowell, like William Allen White, had been one of the Republican party sages, and he came to work on the Chronicle. He was a roly-poly old gentleman, I loved him. He lived in Berkeley, up on Tamalpais Road. He was a man, I think, of great integrity. And I'm sure the people at Cal, in The Bancroft Library, will have a lot of material about him. I hope so, because he deserves it. [The Chester Rowell papers are in The Bancroft Library.]

He had kind of a nervous tic, and if he came in to sit at your desk, or you sat at his desk, he always had his hands busy. I remember one time there was this box of paper clips on Paul Smith's desk. Paul and I had been talking and Chester came in, and he began fussing around. Then he left, and Paul said, "Well, here, I've got these papers. Take them." And he reached for a paper clip, to take one out, and there came a whole chain. Mr. Rowell had put the whole box of paper clips together in a chain! (I'm sorry I wasted your time with that.) But he was a very fine gentleman.

But back to Paul, the reason I went into Paul at this point was that we had become very friendly on a personal basis. For some reason or other, he was very warm toward Ruth and me. When we had set sail out the Golden Gate in the "Mermaid," our little yacht, he had flown down to San Pedro where we tied up for about three or four or five days. There was a girl called Jean Muir who was a young starlet at the time, and they came down on the boat. Then we went up and had dinner and fooled around with them in Hollywood for a few days. So Paul and Ruth and I were on pretty good terms, very close friends. He had made arrangements for my mother to fly down to Mexico when I was so sick, and had chartered a plane and so on.

Filing and Newspaper Libraries

Newhall: Immediately after my amputation, Paul came by the hospital and said, "Oh, by the way, your camera's hanging up in the darkroom for you when you come back." So I had a job waiting for me, basically because of my friendship with Paul.

Everyone at the paper was very nice. It was a very warm place to work. I enjoyed it always. But I did have a leg off, and I was on crutches. I was on crutches for about a year, because the surgeons had not been able to suture the amputation, because there was still so much toxic material draining from the wound. I had to leave it open to drain for about a year, and I couldn't get a wooden leg during that time.

So that year when I was on crutches I went back in the Chronicle library filing stories. Those were the days, of course, long before computers. And the library clips were made up of cuttings from the paper, filed according to either subject matter or the biographical name of the person involved. And I did that on one leg with the crutches, and it worked out very well. I was much lighter then than I am now, and I got around pretty darned well on one leg. It took me about two or three months before I could really get up and around and function. So in answer to your question, they were waiting for me at the Chronicle.

Riess: And would you say that filing is the ideal job to get introduced to the paper?

Newhall: Oh, it was the best thing. Sure. Like being a photographer. Those were the best things that ever happened to me. Because, you know, I was an uneducated person in a sense, really, and still am. And I learned an awful lot about people and things by having to file stories about the world and the human beings in or on it, and to know where to go, for reference books and all that kind of thing. It helps to learn a little bit about how a newspaper is put together.

A library on a newspaper is an immensely important asset, although not all publishers are aware of that. A good newspaper library is crucial--I think the phrase they would use now is "an important community resource." I remember when the Oakland Post-Enquirer went out of business. This was an afternoon paper in Oakland, published by Hearst, and the people who worked there were more tuned in on covering crime stories and the eleventh race at Tanforan or something like that.

But when they closed up the paper--. A paper's usually closed up at a moment's notice, with no early warning; somebody will come in and call the staff together and say, "We're closing up; lock the doors," and that's the end of the newspaper. This almost always happens that way. And at the Post-Enquirer when that paper was suddenly terminated they threw the whole library out in the trash. Took all the files out. Some smart reporter came along and picked the files up, and I think he sold them for quite a lot of money to a library or something.

The Chronicle's old files are here in San Francisco somewhere. I think the California Historical Society may have them.

Paul Smith's Life

Riess: I read quickly through Paul Smith's book called A Personal File. It sounded like he would be a very appealing person. I hadn't realized you were that close in age.

Newhall: Well, he was twenty-six at that point, and I would have been twenty-one or two. We were three or four or five years apart. He was a fantastic apparition in San Francisco. He was something very special. And as executive editor of this Chronicle, which then had a circulation of only about 150,000, he was a big man on the Pacific Coast.

town, always ended up at Paul Smith's apartment for dinner. I met so many people there. It was fabulous. He could attract people as no other human being I have ever known. Nobody was ever neutral on the subject of Paul. They all either admired or loved or enjoyed him immensely, or they disliked him thoroughly.

Riess: Why would they dislike him?

Newhall: Because he would walk into a room--he was not tall, he was probably even shorter than I, and he had red hair and he was what people would describe normally as cocky--he would walk in with a big grin and people reacted to him, they truly did, because he stole the show. He was like Brayton Wilbur, Sr. I don't know, short guys get that way sometimes, I guess. He knew everybody. And people came to pay court to him or to visit him.

Riess: It sounds like he made up his own life, that he really could have been one of those characters who could get to be the top surgeon in a hospital without having gone to medical school.

Newhall: That's right. That's what he did in the newspapers. He was resourceful, imaginative. Where he got his vision, I don't know, but he was headed somewhere. And the war came along and he was in a hurry and he had a most remarkable war career. But in terms of his lifetime, Paul rose so high so rapidly and reached such rarefied levels, that by the time he was forty, forty-five, he was burned out. He came back from the war and was never the same after he returned. I guess he knew somehow or other that he wasn't going to go as far as he had hoped.

The whole Paul Smith story is a fascinating one. If you've ever run across people who knew Paul, you will never get any sort of, "Yeah, I remember him, let's see, what was he? I'm not sure." They'll <u>remember</u> him.

Riess: Mortimer Fleishhacker in his oral history--

Newhall: Mort and Paul were very close.

Riess: He said that Paul collapsed of some mysterious illness, and Fleishhacker wasn't really sure what it was all about.

Newhall: I haven't seen Mort for years. Is he still alive?

Riess: No.

Newhall: Oh, I'm sorry. I met him and Janet quite often at Paul's. They were really quite close.

Riess: And Paul Smith ended up living with you and Ruth for a summer?

Newhall: For a period. We had a house on our property in Berkeley, had built a home there for my mother who had been so sick.

Paul had gone to New York when he left the Chronicle--under strenuous circumstances which I suppose you might want to discuss later on, I don't know. He went to New York, to Collier's magazine as an editor--then later, I believe, as publisher or president--in time to preside over Collier's collapse. They just handed him a sick magazine and it collapsed under him. And he lived the New York life with a view apartment over on the East River and so on. He was still keeping his salon there with the jet set and beautiful people coming through town, the artists and the intellects and so on, intelligentsia, celebrities. And he just gradually sickened. He had some kind of a seizure or something. He fell, a lamp landed on his leg and damaged the sciatic nerve. And he was sort of on crutches and in terrible shape.

To talk about myself, I had a very difficult situation of succeeding him in his job at the Chronicle while being a loyal friend. I was torn between the paper itself and my personal friendship with Paul. We were always very close, but it was a difficult situation because Paul was not good for the Chronicle any longer at that time, he finally left the paper, and it was certainly not good for Paul.

When he went east he got round the town partying to a certain extent, sitting up late, drinking a lot of scotches and sodas and talking with his friends and so on, and he was just abusing himself, too much. I don't know, Paul--the fire gradually died. So he came back out here. We had this house available and he lived there with us for a year or a year and a half, maybe more, I don't know. He wrote his book there. Ruth assisted him quite a bit. For a year, anyway. And then Paul went down to Big Sur. And he lived up in a little house on a hill down there. We would see him on occasion. My lord, he went in and had his abdominal cavity carved up. He got a little bit of everything. I don't think medically anybody can tell you what all happened to him. He had some brain surgery. He had a lot of trouble.

Finally he was broke. It was the saddest thing I've ever seen. He had a big blue car that meant a lot to him, an Imperial Chrysler, robin's egg blue, 1957. The motor burned out on it and he couldn't pay the garage bill and he finally went to the Veteran's Hospital down in Menlo Park or Palo Alto, wherever it is. He was so sick. I went down to see him and I realized that he didn't want to remember his past or his friends--this idea of going down so a person can remember the good times is not all that good because under some conditions the good old times can become pretty unhappy.

Paul fell out of bed one night when he was in the Vet's

And there he lay immobilized, this man who I promise you quite objectively was by far the most dynamic personality who had come through San Francisco for a generation or two. I mean, this was something, I had never seen, as I say, anyone rise so fast, so high, and come to such an unkind denouement. It was so sad.

Riess: Well, it's interesting. He wrote his book certainly before he had come to that stage in his life.

Newhall: He wrote it mostly while he was living in our place. Ruth, my wife, helped a great deal with it. He still had a couple of houseboys with him who sort of took care of him.

I do want to say, while I'm on the subject, though, that I saw so much of Paul in all those years, on so many occasions--and it was difficult sometimes because he was a very demanding, he wanted attention and demanded people around him--but I learned more, I picked up more journalistic ideas or ideals, journalistic notions, principles, more from Paul than from any other single human being I've ever known. He was something.

Riess: He picked them up where?

Newhall: I don't know. It was almost magic. He read. He was never educated, really, beyond Pescadero School down below Pacifica there, down by Half Moon Bay--and I think he went to school in Oakland. He had been put out into foster homes. His mother had been married or his father died or something, who knows. It was a very hazy background and he always made quite a point of that. He never had any family stability whatsoever, never knew his father, I know that. So here is this little redheaded guy, going to fight his way up through the American establishment, which he did. He had guts.

Riess: It was the establishment that he obviously identified with.

Newhall: Well, he used them.

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: But finally he couldn't beat them, though he thought he could. He wanted to buy the Chronicle at one time, but of course that wouldn't have worked out, or didn't.

Riess: Yes. "He had the mistaken notion that ambition and talent were thicker than blood," I read.

Newhall: That's one way of phrasing it. He didn't understand the complexities of California feudal family life. Feudal, not futile.

You asked where did he get his ideas. He read voraciously, as one would say, or omnivorously. And many of us around him read

one would say, or omnivorously. And many of us around him read these books by Walter Duranty, Vincent Sheean, John Gunther, all the current fashionable books on journalism. We all were sort of fired up and brought up in our twenties on the Chronicle, under Paul, as young reforming intellectuals--I don't know what you want to call them, I don't know--but we were all cast from the same kind of mold.

Also he was a Republican, and we were, many of us, Republicans, at least nominally. But we were all set to make the world into a bigger and better place. We did not go along particularly with the old Republican gang. And there was Paul writing for Hoover. It was all kind of strange.

The Reforming Young Intellectuals

Riess: You're saying you didn't go along particularly with his political views?

Newhall: Oh, yes. Paul's first big journalistic splash at the Chronicle--this old eighty-year-old, ninety-year-old newspaper which had always been somewhat to the right of Hoover or Chester Arthur--was when he went down personally to cover a lettuce strike in the Salinas Valley. You've probably read this, I don't know. And the Chronicle came out really on the side of the lettuce workers--on the side of the pickers and the strikers. Oh, my god, this set the whole town on its ear. So here you had this dashing young man on the flying trapeze of liberal politics in San Francisco, trying to breathe life into the Chronicle.

Riess: Who were the what you would call young Turks? Is this an appropriate expression?

Newhall: Oh, I don't know. I was just a young good guy. I don't know about the rest of them. Maybe they were Turks, I don't know. But who were they? Was that your question?

Riess: Yes. Apparently they were all young.

Newhall: Paul favored young men. And I went from the Chronicle library to the Sunday magazine--oh, and I wrote the society items for a while. But then I went to the Sunday news magazine, the tabloid-sized magazine called This World. The editor was a young guy then called Bill Richardson who was a brilliant, brilliant semanticist. He was young, twenty-four or twenty-five. He had a pretty wife called Antrine from the deep south. But Bill began bouncing checks or something, and Bill finally left.

These guys, they knew their grammar, they knew their syntax.

They were on fire with the future of journalism. Jack Pegues was a young man from Alaska who had come down, from which college I don't know. Jack was on This World, the Chronicle's Sunday news magazine. Larry Fanning became assistant managing editor later. He was from San Francisco University, USF here. He was going through this horrible fight that so many young Catholic Irishmen go through between, you know, original sin and Catholic doctrine and the wild and wooly world of sex. I don't know. Larry was a charming guy. He was another of Paul's young newspaper proteges. Linton von Beroldinger later became managing editor of the Examiner.

But here were all the old guys on the Chronicle who had been hacking out these stories for so many years and the paper was going along losing money. And Paul came along, started this fire under it, turned it into the New Republic of the West. He always kept wanting to turn the Chronicle into the New York Times of the West. The Chronicle never became that at all. It was just kind of a stodgy and very small newspaper. But the idealism, if I may use that word, was certainly there. Everybody was on fire with principle and we were going to reform the world and do wonderful, great things.

Paul would go out on a vacation, driving around the countryside or going east or traveling somewhere, and these young guys would show up at the Chronicle managing editor's desk. And they would say, "Mr. Smith told me to come here for a job. He picked me up hitchhiking in Idaho." This would happen all the time. God, the place was full of them.

Riess: Did George Cameron just withdraw from the scene?

Newhall: Uncle George and Aunt Helen--she was Helen deYoung, the oldest one of the deYoung sisters--had no children. And I think Paul was probably their long-lost son or something, I don't know. Uncle George was really fond of Paul, and vice versa.

Riess: And he could do no wrong?

Newhall: Exactly. Uncle George said, "Gee, my boy," you know. Uncle George was not essentially a newspaper man at all. He was in the cement business and very much involved with the Crocker Bank, as were so many people I knew then. He kept picking up Paul's bills and backing Paul's sometimes flashy lifestyle. Fortunately the cement business was somewhat better than the newspaper business. They built the Golden Gate Bridge, among other things, and the Bay Bridge out of a lot of cement then. So the cement kept the paper afloat.

Riess: I said to Karl Kortum, it sounded like Paul Smith and you were the same kind of guys. And he said, oh no, that Smith was always putting on some kind of a show.

Newhall: So am I in a sense, I guess, but no! Paul had to prove something, because Paul, I guess--I mean, without resorting to expert Freudian psychoanalysis--I don't think Paul had any knowledge or feeling of belonging anywhere. He came from nowhere. He didn't know what his parentage really was, no matter what the legalities of the matter were. And therefore he had to assemble his family around him as he raced through life. I suppose this was a massive, in a sense, insecurity. So his whole life was proving that he was a very important somebody. I can only sympathize enormously with the man, because in my case anyway, I have always been able to fall back and know where I had grown up and been born and so on and so forth. And Paul apparently didn't have that to fall back on.

Riess: Yes, well that's a big difference.

The staff under him included William German.

Newhall: Yes. German is still there.

Riess: And [Abe] Mellinkoff. They started with you?

Newhall: Yes. Abe came to work I think a few months before I did, because we went out together on a story right in the very beginning. We had just started at the Chronicle, both of us kind of green. Bill German came in a few years later, I think, two or three years later.

Herb Caen

Riess: And Herb Caen?

Newhall: Yes. Paul got him, and Herb has a real fix about Paul.

Riess: Negative?

Newhall: No, no, not at all. Paul looms to Herb as a kind of a major saint, one of the archangels or something. Herb spent a great deal of time in Paul's company. I would say Herb and I were probably the two closest--by close I mean we were up there at Paul's apartment headquarters most. Paul had us around the most.

Riess: You mean up in his office?

Newhall: In his apartment, you know, at his parties, his salon, his soirees. Not so much in the office. Herb and Paul were in a sense so close and so intertwined and perhaps shared some equal psychic problems. But Herb walked out and went to the Examiner, so he has carried with him like Saul of Tarsus or whomever, this horrible guilt because he had walked out on the Messiah. When Herb did come back to the

Chronicle Paul then was long gone. And Herb has had to go through life reassuring himself and everyone that he was really the most faithful of all Paul's disciples. I don't want to get too deep into this.

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Newhall: It's one thing to walk out on your boss, another thing to walk out on your father or on God. It's a little problem. Apostates aren't always so happy.

Riess: But this prodigal son--

Newhall: Yes, but Paul was gone when Herb came back home. You see Herb came back when I was there.

Smith's Style of Running the Paper

Riess: Give me a little sense of how the Chronicle ran under Smith.

Newhall: Well, Paul ran the paper pretty much by delegation Incidentally, there are times when he would do some stories. When England went to war he went over to London for the "blitz" and wrote some stories then.

He wanted to participate from time to time in the dashing foreign correspondent aspect, too. But he did have to try to run the paper successfully enough to build up advertising, and he had plenty of editors and managers available. And his social life and newspaper life and business life all sort of melded into one scene.

Paul would go to the editorial conference usually every morning. The editorial conference included the editorial writers, two or three, whatever there were, and the cartoonist, and then Paul would come in to join them--which is actually what I did later on, usually. He would not go to the daily news conferences or participate in the daily coverage or anything like that. He would talk to each one of his editors or subeditors or whatever you want to call them from time to time on specific things, or they would go to him. He ran a pretty good ship that way. The paper was able to come out because he had a lot of people working for him who admired him and liked him.

It wasn't all that different years later when I was there, not all that different. We rolled along in somewhat the same style, but with some different people. I can be more specific on it if you want. I didn't attend the editorial conferences myself until a couple of years after the war. I had been editor of This World for

long time, and later, after the war, became Sunday editor. The Sunday editor more or less produces the whole Sunday paper minus the regular daily news. And then, when Paul left, I became executive editor. I didn't have as much control, right away at least, as he had enjoyed.

Power

Riess: There's a lot of power there and I think it's interesting how it works.

Newhall: Well, if you have a paper at your disposal in a community of this nature you can theoretically, or presumably, wield a great deal of power. I don't know how theoretical you want me to get, but one of the great motivations of the members of any community to participate in the life, the cultural, intellectual, political or sports life of that community, is the reward of seeing your name in print. It's an ego trip on the part of the politicians, celebrities, artists or such I'm talking about.

When you go into any community and you're going to start a paper, you think, okay, who shall be included in the cast of characters. And you can wield influence--not power necessarily--by the amount of publicity or exposure that is given to different leaders or candidates for leadership in the community.

Now I don't know if it's very clear what I'm saying, but this is why papers are one of the few industries in the United States of America that can be losing $20 million a year and yet somebody will pay $30 million for the privilege of owning such a paper. A newspaper publisher can achieve instant social status and wield this influence by the use of publicity, by sprinkling his favors on the beautiful people of the town, in the form of stories and photographs and selected publicity in his newspaper columns. I do not mean to sound too cynical or surgical about the whole thing, but this is a fact of life.

Riess: How are those messages gotten across? By innuendo or is it very directly said?

Newhall: I can't describe it exactly At least I wouldn't, and I don't think Paul would have said, "Well, I will give you this coverage, or use your name in the paper if you will do that, so on and so forth." Or, "I will support you or publicize you or laud you, praise you, whatever." But you do hold this weapon of either criticism, or damnation--or glorification--of individuals who are within the political, cultural structure of the community.

Riess: And usually that's decided by your publisher, isn't it?

Newhall: It all depends.

Riess: But for Paul Smith it wasn't the publisher?

Newhall: Well, Paul Smith was dominant on the Chronicle. Absolutely he was dominant. He would cave in once in a while. (Usually one would cave in in terms of the society page, just to be sure the publisher's family was happy with the social coverage or something like that.) Paul was dominant because he made a point of endorsing liberal candidates, liberal causes, and shocking and jolting the family and the Chronicle out of the complacent Republican rut it had been in for so many generations. A publisher certainly controls the corporate reality of a newspaper, which means the circulation of paychecks. And therefore, in the end, the publisher is the dominant personality because he can hire and fire all the editors he wants to.

Now you have to watch out again for titles. Many publishers are hired hands, so they have no power--no true endemic power. Many newspapers are now controlled by corporations. So again it's the chairman or the president of the corporation who has the power. Then the publisher just becomes an editor and manager--a hired hand. So watch out for titles. Do you follow me?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: In the Hearst papers, for example, a board of directors in New York can hire and fire publishers more or less at will. In the end the power does reside with the group that is in control of the treasury. It's as simple as that. But if you get a good, smart editor or a good, smart publisher and he's making them a lot of money, then who is manipulating whom?

Riess: Yes. All right. Wonderful business!

Newhall: Tiresome after fifty or sixty years.

Scott Newhall, Reporter on the Rise

Riess: Where did you start writing once you were really on two feet? It was the society page first, did you say?

Newhall: I went in there from the library I guess for a period of three or four or five months. I was writing Sunday handouts, about a party given by Mr. and Mrs. Crossett, or Mr. and Mrs. Fay, you know. "Among those present were the Monsieurs and Mesdames So-and-So and

So-and-So."

Riess: Did you cover them, or did you just rewrite?

Newhall: No, I didn't cover them. I was still on crutches. In most papers they have just a lot of routine social coverage. There's a party list, guests so-and-so and so forth. Like the box scores at the ball games and such. But I didn't cover any of the World Series games in the society section.

Riess: [laughter] I was looking at some old Chronicles. Those were the days when they had really big pictures of weddings. I mean, really big!

Newhall: Oh, yes. Well, that was big. In the old Chronicle at the same time you will find two or three pages of shipping news with big pictures of people coming in from the East Coast and China and the Hawaiian Islands and all that. And that's all changed, it's gone. There's no more shipping news and there's not much more social news, unless it's a benefit for the crippled children of Sausalito or something.

This World

Riess: Let's see. From that social page you said you went to This World?

Newhall: This World. Paul started that.

Riess: Paul started that in 1936.

Newhall: Totally. He used to like to run around with people like Luce and the Cowleses. Look magazine and Life and all that crowd. He thought, well, the Sunday newspaper ought to run a competition with Time magazine. So This World, as it was called, was born. It was just a copy, in a sense--far better of course--but nevertheless patterned on Time magazine, weekly news style. We would pick our stories from the wire services and papers and magazines. We wrote and sweated through a four-day week, because This World came out once a week on Sundays. Those were long, long days.

Riess: But didn't a lot of writers develop there?

Newhall: It was a wonderful place.

Riess: Joseph Henry Jackson.

Newhall: Joe, yes. He wrote book reviews and put together a stable of critics for his book section. That was a major section of its own. The main news review section of This World was written in the chatty

condensed prose developed by Time. This boiled-down news writing style can teach a reporter a hell of a lesson in craftsmanship. The writer must try to hold his reader's attention by spinning a short yarn about what supposedly is going on in the world of news. You have to write it tight, try to get some color in there, but no editorializing or no opinion in it. You do your best, anyway.

Riess: But you said they were wire stories.

Newhall: You cull all the information on a current news topic. For example today, if we were putting together This World right now, there would be a main story about Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson, and the current political convulsions. I think, the Chronicle subscribed to ten or eleven news services. We also subscribed to a lot of newspapers and local magazines and speciality magazines and material like that. We just filed all the incoming news material according to subject, then the writers would go through all the sources on any given news item and bang out a story.

About By-lines

Riess: With by-lines?

Newhall: No, no by-lines. This World didn't use them. Well, they do put by-lines in Time now, I notice. But no, none of that in This World. A by-line used to be something rather desirable and important. Today it's just, well, you say to a guy, "Do you want a raise or a by-line?" Most of them go for the by-line. But then, of course, they want the raise afterwards. Take the little Signal, our own paper down south in Newhall. We've got more by-lines in that paper every day than we had in the Chronicle in six months, then. Everybody gets a by-line now. I'm not particularly sympathetic with that, because it tends to personalize the news. But I suppose readers are used to it now. You'll find those big by-lines in every major paper in the country. The real newspaper business has gone to hell.

Riess: It implies that there's an editorial stance if there's a named person writing the piece?

Newhall: I think some of it comes from the fact that some smaller papers want people to think they've got a lot of reporters on the staff. I don't know. And it's an ego trip for the reporters, you know. As I say, "a raise or a by-line."

Riess: It's always struck me as being more meaty somehow when you see a by-line there.

Newhall: Psychologically, more people are used to it. I don't know when you

began reading newspapers, whether they had by-lines then or not. There used to be no by-lines in newspapers, then pretty soon if a story was wonderful they would give the writer a line. It was time for an award or a bonus.

Riess: The first time I noticed newspapers was when I was writing for one myself.

Newhall: Where was that?

Riess: The Bethlehem Globe-Times.

Newhall: Did they give you by-lines?

Riess: Well, I was doing interviews, and I think, yes, and I was called a feature writer.

Newhall: That's pretty wild, that's nice.

I will say, at one time if a person got a by-line it was recognition that he or she was a top person, fit to run with the old pros on the staff, the fast track. And it was a real recognition. Now it's a cheap shot. I'm not trying to belittle it, but I finally had to make a rule down at the little paper in Newhall: no more than one by-line per person per page. Because then you're giving away the awful truth that you've got only two people on the staff--if you see what I mean.

Riess: Yes [chuckles], I have seen papers that looked like that, that's right. And those same people were there with their cameras, too.

Newhall: That's absolutely right.

War Years

With the Royal Navy in the North Sea

Riess: Up to World War II you were editor.

Newhall: I was editor of This World.

Riess: Yes. Then you were aboard a Royal Navy destroyer? How did you get that assignment?

Newhall: Well, would it be of any help if I just quickly ran through the chronology of my overseas stint?

Riess: Sure.

Newhall: I was editor of This World at the time of Pearl Harbor. Here in San Francisco a lot of our Chronicle staff had gone off to the war, most of the guys. There were just a few of us left around. This was in 1942, when San Francisco was booming with shipyards. This was when the city began to blossom as part of the arsenal of democracy. At the Western Pipe and Steel shipyard they were building these little aircraft carriers. They were escort carriers--baby flat tops--for anti-submarine work. And we were building them for the British. British crews would arrive from England to take them back across the Atlantic.

While the British servicemen were here in the Bay Area they were entertained by San Franciscans. I've always liked the British and we were very close to the public relations people in the British Information Service who were using the Chronicle as a pipeline to drum up "hands across the sea." They were lobbying for poor old beleaguered England and all that. And we got to be very good friends. We went to a lot of hard-drinking parties and various celebrations with the young Royal Navy airmen and the aircraft carriers crews and officers.

So they invited me, to put it briefly, to come back to England with them on board one of the carriers. I said, "Sure, that's fine." So they talked to our managing editor, who was then a fellow called Bill Chandler--a nice family guy. Paul was away at war. Bill said, "Sure, you can't miss that opportunity."

Well, I climbed on board the carrier and went off to the war.

[later addition] May I interrupt here for the purposes of clarity and provide a quick vignette of how and where I went to war?

On a personal basis I had become very close to the officers of a couple of baby flat-tops that the Western Pipe and Steel company was building down in South San Francisco--HMS Attacker and HMS Stalker. Their ships were essentially nothing but tanker hulls, slightly beefed up, with landing decks on top. In a sense they were floating bombs or mines--they went to sea with thousands of gallons of aviation fuel sloshing around in their bottoms. But they became a key to solving the problem of German U-boats destroying the trans-Atlantic convoys.

Anyway, at some point, my friends who were about to take the Attacker to sea asked me if I would like to come along. And obviously I jumped at the chance to participate in the excitement and fame and perils of war. You see, no one would draft or accept me as a volunteer for military service because of my wooden leg. Many of my friends were away, to do their duty, so I was restless. But a problem arose. Shortly before the Attacker was to sail out

the Golden Gate, my amputation began acting up and the doctor had to open it up and clean it up a little.

The Attacker sailed without me, but my friends on the Stalker, which was due to cast off in about a month, invited me to join them. That was perfect, except that in the meantime I was taking things a little easy. I was on crutches because I could not wear the wooden leg. And one morning early when I got out of bed and hopped to the shower I happened to stumble and fell down and broke my wrist. And this was really inconvenient.

Anyway, my great and good hero Dr. Leo Eloesser was on hand to patch me up. Leo Eloesser was a substantial San Francisco giant--he was less than five feet tall, but he was still a giant, and I owed most of my life to him. In any case that same evening I went over to the old Stanford Hospital in San Francisco where he was going to set my wrist. The treatment rooms seemed to be occupied at the time, but with his customary celestial indifference Dr. Eloesser decided to do his bone setting on a magazine table in an upstairs visitors lobby. He summoned a nurse or two and asked for the requisite plaster of Paris bandages and a pail of water and some towels or papers with which to cover the table.

The nurses were pretty frosty, but they finally hustled up the stuff and brought a copy of the day's Chronicle to cover the table. Without cracking an expression, the good doctor thereupon stated, "Nurse, will you please get an Examiner for the table cover. I can't set this man's wrist on a Chronicle. Please bring me the Examiner. It's better for this kind of thing." Well, if anyone could have seen the poor nurse's reaction--an expression of horror, disbelief, mingled with scorn and frustration! But she did finally provide the proper paper. It was gaudy. However, Dr. Eloesser did indeed set my wrist on the front page of the Examiner and he never did explain to the nurse the relative therapeutic merits of the Examiner and Chronicle.

And back to the war. I was still heading for the war zones, and I must confess that the spectacle of my departure for Armageddon must have had a touch of peculiarity about it. I appeared for the Stalker's departure from the San Francisco waterfront in correspondent's dress. That morning I was off crutches and able to strap on my wooden leg for the first time in a month. My left arm was in a cast and I suppose I was limping a bit more than usual because my leg was still throbbing somewhat. I was afraid to show up at the pier with a set of crutches in my hand, because I was terrified that I would be weeded out as an undesirable member of the ship's company by the officer of the watch. Anyway, I got on board and collapsed in my appointed cabin until we had cleared the harbor.

And we were off to the war. And now let me add a couple of chronological and geographical paragraphs of where and how we went:

from San Francisco through the Panama Canal to Norfolk, the big navy yard in Virginia, where a second or third cousin of mine, Captain Scott Baker, was in charge of the shipyard. At Norfolk I caught up with and transferred to the Attacker. From Norfolk we went down to the Caribbean to Jamaica and Curacao to join up with the oil convoys to Britain. Then across the Atlantic to Liverpool eventually, without losing a ship. From Liverpool I went to London, leased a flat around the corner from Madame Tussaud's waxworks. And from London I spent five or six months roaming all over England covering both American and British and exiled continental troops organizing D-Day.

The Germans were still bombing London every night, but by this time nobody paid as much attention to the bomb shelters as during the Blitz. The city of London at war was unforgettable. It was life and death, love and hate, laughter and tears, I don't know, soldiers and sailors and pilots and Red Cross girls, Wrens and women sergeants, homosexual boulevardiers, and generous cab drivers. I visited everything I could think of--American army rehearsals for D-Day, RAF giant bomber squadrons that flew deep into Germany every night. They wouldn't take me along with them, thank god! American air fighter groups north of London, the elite exile Polish army division headquartered in the Earl of Weymss' (which is pronounced Weems)--the Earl of Weymss' castle at palatial Gosford House outside of Edinburgh, the anti-aircraft battery at Ladywell east of London.

At one point my friends at the Royal Navy provided me with a plane, a Fairey Fulmar two-seat fighter complete with a marvelous young pilot with a wooden leg. We were a fine pair. We flew around the south of England out to Cornwall and then up to Scotland for RN torpedo plane exercises at Crail and Arbroath.

I spent a time out at Great Yarmouth with the motor gunboat squadrons. It was strange somehow, crawling and pitching along the coast of Germany and Holland one night, and then the next night sitting comfortably in a choice seat at the London Palladium theater enjoying a musical review and supper party. London in the blackout was something--bombs going off somewhere in the distance, on foggy nights queues forming up to lead each other across an intersection, Chelsea cigarettes available by the carton at the American PX stores, girls available everywhere for a single package of Chelseas.

The Americans were so rich and the English were so hungry. I remember that up at the U.S. airbases around lunchtime the RAF fighter planes often suffered engine trouble and had to make forced landings. The British pilots were always asked to stay on for lunch or dinner--and they ate so much, as if they hadn't seen serious food for a month. Oh, yes, I almost forget, I had to go up to an American army hospital in Oxford for a week or so to have a little repair work done on my leg. Anyway, the London of World War II was

a splendid scene--a city wounded, but vital and vigorous. A confusion of destruction, compassion, togetherness, and survival. I went almost everywhere I wanted to go, saw as much as I could hold, and then I felt it was time to come home and maybe digest some of it.

So I went back across the North Atlantic on an old World War I British destroyer. This was the roughest sea voyage I have made. But we made it to Argentia in Newfoundland. And then came back here to the Chronicle. I served for the rest of the war, here on San Francisco Bay with the auxiliary temporary reserve Coast Guard on a patrol boat. We were called the bald-headed SPARS. Finally, the war was over.

Then in 1945 after V.E. Day, before V.J. Day, the founding conference of the United Nations was convened at the San Francisco Opera House here. And Ruth and I were very active covering that. We were handling the Latin American delegations. Paul came back and the pieces sort of began to be picked up again. I became Sunday editor, and then Paul got in all this trouble and I became executive editor. Then for nineteen years I was trying to be very helpful in putting out the Chronicle, and I left the Chronicle in 1971. For a year or six months I was at San Francisco Magazine. After that I had a dreadful time running for mayor of San Francisco, unsuccessfully. In the meantime--.

Riess: [chuckles]

Newhall: Well, I'm just trying to tell you what the sequence was! I left San Francisco Magazine after about six months. In 1963 I had bought the Signal down south. So then when I left the Chronicle we sort of moved south to put out the Signal. I've been at the Signal ever since.

"Crowding My Luck"--Raw Fear

Riess: Much earlier, what did you do when you were on the British destroyer? You were on board as a reporter?

Newhall: Well, I could do anything I wanted, you know. I could go anywhere in the world this side of Germany and France and Japan--this was before D-day of course. The assignment was to just do whatever I wanted, to cover any war-related stories I could dig up. Remember, I was unfit for an active job at the fighting front because of my wooden leg. The next best thing to war service was riding along as a kind of passenger in warships and planes--writing stories of the warriors. But I was crowding my luck.

Riess: What do you mean, crowding it?

Newhall: Well, crowding my luck. You know at one point I was out in the North Sea and getting into these little patrol boat skirmishes with the German E-boats, and, you know, nobody but a damn fool wants to get shot at unless it's relatively necessary. Why put yourself out there for no reason other than simple curiosity?

Riess: The feeling of the rest of the people on the boat probably was mortal terror.

Newhall: Well, I was more scared than they were. I promise you. Oh, the fright was something. Fear has an unpleasant taste in one's mouth. But that was destiny. The others were there because they had to be. And I didn't. I asked myself, "Why are you doing this? What are you proving?" Anyway, I used that as an excuse for why I came home. And I had to get back to work.

Riess: Did you file stories from that ship, feature stories?

Newhall: I wrote some pieces on the torpedo boat actions for the North American Newspaper Alliance syndicate. Oddly enough, the London papers picked up some of the stuff, as well as the Chronicle. There was something slightly eerie--I was living in a flat in London and I received mail from the parents of young British sailors who had been killed or wounded in some actions I had covered.

I remember I had some pieces on the old World War I destroyer, the Vidette. These were just color stories where they've got a submarine on the way back. But there wasn't anything to that, you know, you don't even see it. The trip on the destroyer was from Londonderry to Argentia, in Newfoundland. It was the North Sea convoy route ONS 10. This meant Oversea Northatlantic Slow, I think, convoy. It took us about nineteen days, because our mean rate of advance was only about five nautical miles an hour. You go in this great circle in the North Atlantic, just south of Iceland, and come around off, there's a Cape Farewell or something in Greenland. Our true rate of advance was a good five knots or something like that, because we were continually zigzagging and everything else.

In terms of a sea voyage it was something! I have never been, with one possible exception, in any rougher situation. It blew. You get the westerlies up there in the North Atlantic, and a World War I destroyer is even smaller than our old four-stackers from World War I, the American destroyers in World War I. And we were pounding into very, very severe gales. One night--you know, you sort of tie yourself in your bunk so you wouldn't be thrown out--there was a big crash and I tell you the whole boat shuddered. I figured we had had a torpedo, I really did. And I remember I just rolled over and said, "Hell, I can't make it to deck. I'm going to

die nice and warm, right here, when I do." Well, a massive wave had carried off our deck guns, just the seas coming over that poor old ship.

We made it all right, but I must admit I never had a trip like that, ever. I consider myself very lucky, honestly, to have gotten back. I'm not trying to build it up. I've been in some blows here and there, plenty of them. But that North Atlantic is something.

Riess: Yes. You're talking about the elements now, not the war.

Newhall: I'm just talking about getting that ship across. We were supposed to be protecting a convoy and here we were trying to stay afloat. And you'd see these little trawlers. I mean, the American people have basically no concept of how the British had to fight this war. The British went to war in stuff that would have been surveyed out and put in a junk pile here in the United States. This little destroyer we were in, I don't know what they would have done with it. I doubt if we Americans would have sailed it across San Francisco Bay.

After these months I had with the Royal Navy, I have the most profound respect for the British navy. And no American is supposed to say that. I would never tangle with them as long as I lived as an American, believe me. They are amazing. They get these kids out of Oxford, you know, it's the same thing with the RAF. Some of them have a handkerchief up their sleeves, and they have this very broad Cambridge or Oxford accent. But my god, what warriors they are! They are fantastic. After all, as you know, they did control half of planet earth with a "thin red line" for one hundred or two hundred years. They have been bred and brought up for that, believe it.

Just about a month ago I drove to San Diego and I met one of my old shipmates, ward shipmates on the HMS Stalker. He's over here, he's still alive. He had run the laundry on board. Of course he was also the fire control director, but ran the laundry, so we were good friends. He came over here with his wife who is now an author of Gothic novels, a very successful author, and I went down and traded a few memories with him from forty-five years ago.

Riess: They knew that you were an American journalist.

Newhall: Oh yes, sure. I was in uniform, oh sure.

Riess: Did they tell you any tales? Were you privy to everything?

Newhall: Oh, sure, I was the assistant to the code officer on board the Vidette. Everybody went to work. Oh, sure. As a correspondent you were all part of the show. Those motor gun boats in the North Sea --that is another type of service--that's where I was the most

frightened of all.

Riess: Do people pray on boats like that?

Newhall: I'm sure they did. They used to have service on the larger vessels. You would do anything. You don't waste your time and effort not believing in anything. Anything that will preserve your life you're willing to go through, believe me. Because as far as I'm concerned it's the only time in my life--. In the North Sea we got into a little engagement with a couple of German E-boats. And the raw fear is a sour taste. I can't describe it. But I didn't like it much.

Wars, and the United States in World War II

Riess: I was thinking maybe you were leading up to the idea that everyone should experience this.

Newhall: It helps. A little fear goes a long way. One doesn't want to go back to war, right away. You know, right now this poor old country of ours--this is 1988 that we're talking--is so restless and so ready to go back to war. And we are restless. I don't care what anyone says. At the moment we have a president there in Washington who can't live or breathe without sending troops somewhere. I used to write editorials for the Signal saying, "Okay, if they want to do it, fine. Any president can send his army to war as long as he will be riding in the first landing ship to go to shore." I tell you, it's ugly, there is no glory. War is only tragedy. But people do get so damned bored, they're willing to trade, I guess, trade tragedy for boredom, I don't know.

Riess: And if you've ever seen any of the movies that have come out recently, the Vietnam War movies, you'd think they'd be enough--but there is that sort of balance between it being terrifying and it being quite, quite thrilling.

Newhall: People do survive. The heroes normally survive, the hero figures. I didn't think much of "Apocalypse Now." Did you see that?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: I couldn't quite follow it all, but it did show some of the hopelessness and the utter, I think, the ugliness. Some of those scenes in there were just terrible, it seemed to me.

Riess: Yes. But it is the survivor's story, always.

Newhall: Always the survivor tells the story. Dead men don't talk or write. Very few movies will dare come out and kill off the hero.

Let me add one little thing to this. I have been talking about fright, the fear of this, that, and the other. But in the midst of war and fear there are parties, there are laughs, there are jokes. In wartime there's some sort of a counterpoint to the ugliness and fear; when people are living on the edge of disaster there exists a lot of hysterical laughter too. In the ward room we had more fun and laughs than any place I've ever been in my life. You know, when we were fooling along, not dodging bullets and fearing the enemy. War is grotesque.

Riess: And that was encouraged?

Newhall: Oh yes, you had to, to survive. Oh sure, it was jolly. And you formed very, very close friendships, and they would go on for a long time. Some of the fellows, I was in the same ship with them for a matter of weeks or something, but you'd feel you knew them all your life.

Riess: Were you pro-war?

Newhall: I felt it was inevitable. I felt it was a necessity. Inevitable, really, more than a necessity. I didn't see any other resolution to the rise of raw power and raw brutality in Germany.

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Riess: About getting into the war, was the paper early on the bandwagon?

Newhall: There was never any debate about it. We were so anti-Hitler and resentful of Germany that there was not much talk about it, not much yelling or shouting around the paper. As I say, Paul was totally sold on getting into the field himself. He volunteered the day the Japanese made their sortie over Pearl Harbor. My feeling was very strong that it was inevitable, it was fate, there was no way out. Hitler had to be stopped. And it was a matter of time.

I remember, I was a great admirer of Roosevelt, particularly in his first two terms. I didn't think he should have run for a third term; I thought it was very un-American, but that's one of those things.

I was irritated with Roosevelt because, as with every American president that I can remember, his platform was, "I'll keep us out of war, I hate war," all this. And the guy was lying through his teeth because he knew he had to go to war and he didn't have the guts to lead us into war. Now I think he was probably correct, pragmatically and politically, the way he handled it. But there was no escaping it, no matter what anyone would like to think now.

Riess: You didn't come from a conscientious objector point of view.

Newhall: Oh no, no. I felt, unfortunately, we've got to.

Lately there's all this talk, mostly from some of the Jewish groups, that gee, we didn't do anything, we sat by, we didn't know what was happening in Europe. Well, as far as I'm concerned I knew what was going on in Europe.

You know, there's a lot of 20-20 hindsight in all this stuff. In 1933 Ruth and I came back on the S.S. Gerolstein which was a Jewish-owned ship from Germany. And most of the people on board were refugee Jews coming out then. This was '33. But the stories were all over the place.

I don't know what people mean when they say, "We let it happen. We didn't know about it." I do not recall anytime when I was not aware of the brutality and menace of Germany. I didn't know in '33 everything I would know, say, in '39, but many of the American people, and certainly I, felt that the greatest incentive for our going to war was Hitler's terrible behavior with reference to not only the many Jews but all of the people who were in concentration camps. And we couldn't stay out of it. Now, we might have gone into the war sooner, but perhaps we even did better by not going into it quite as soon and by sending all this stuff to the British. There was a lot of anti-war feeling in this country at the time, but I never encountered it. I have no recollection of it whatever. I'm sure many people will tell you differently. But oh god, it was coming.

You probably wouldn't remember, but Hitler's speeches were broadcast, we used to listen to them. It was the most terrible nightmare in the world. And it was. The editorials we used to do about Chamberlain and all that stuff--. Anyway, I think that hindsight tends to be 20-20. But we did get into it, and it was a tough thing, and a lot of people got rich from it.

Riess: That's a funny conclusive remark.

Newhall: Well, I was just thinking and sermonizing that war was a terrible thing for the country. Then I thought of all the thousands of people who came out here, the boilermakers who were women, the shipbuilders, pipefitters of America, and they would go into Magnin's buying mink coats for cash. It was quite a scene. You know, we had hundreds of thousands of war workers out here, and they made out like bandits.

Women in Wartime, and Ruth Newhall's Career

Riess: Yes, and as you were saying about the paper, women got a chance to show what they could do. And then of course, they were sent back home.

Newhall: Well, that had been understood. And there wasn't much of a hassle because most of the women on the paper had husbands or gentlemen friends who were serving overseas, and they were totally sympathetic and understood that they had to give up their jobs to their husbands or sweethearts or whatever. Everyone who came to work had to sign a note stating that they were replacing a male employee. And everyone who left the Chronicle, who either volunteered or was drafted, was given a guarantee to have his job back. This is on the Chronicle.

Riess: That was the policy of other businesses?

Newhall: I can't answer that. All I know is we did it. I think it was certainly understood and agreed to, not legally or formally perhaps, but by many, many businesses.

There was this real patriotic war fever abroad, of course. When you get a bunch of Japanese flying over Pearl Harbor and dropping bombs on poor old Americans, American soil, you're going to have an upsurge of patriotism you can't believe. Pearl Harbor meant war. This wasn't a silly Vietnam farce. The difference between World War II and Vietnam are so striking as to be incomprehensible.

Riess: Some of these women, like Carolyn Anspacher, went on in their jobs.

Newhall: Some of them did. Carolyn was there long before the war, and she was permanent. I think a few of them did. We had copy girls. It was strange to see girls instead of boys hustling copy and fetching coffee. That was the first thing. Some of them stayed on and went onward and upward with the art.

Riess: What was Ruth doing during this time?

Newhall: She worked on This World for almost the whole war. Incidentally she also bore and reared her children at the same time.

Riess: After the two of you got married, she worked all that time?

Newhall: When we got married she was working at the art department at Cal as a secretary. We went out traveling and we came back. I was sick, I lost my leg. I went to work on the paper. Ruth came to work on the paper writing on This World--I'm sorry, I'm not sure when, because she came and went. She'd come to work for a while and then go home. She'd have kids and then she worked on the World writing. Then she'd have a child or two, and she'd come back and she would work

maybe in a different department. She worked writing editorials for a while, later on. At one period she stayed in Berkeley and worked the police beat in Berkeley for the Chronicle. Then when we went down and bought the newspaper in the south--she's the editor down there now. Hell, she's the editor-in-chief.

Riess: Very impressive.

Newhall: Well, you know, the girls now, the ladies now, they have a child and they get to reading books and they start bonding themselves to their child. They're ruining a whole generation.

See, we were able with Ruth at work to afford household help. We always had a housekeeper to take care of the kids. And her record was remarkable--it was probably only about six weeks after each child was born that she came back to work. I don't know how she did it, I really don't know. Because she went home and she took care of that house and she took care of those children. It was quite a life. I thought it was wonderful.

And almost all the time we worked together in the newspaper business. Our whole life, basically, we always worked together except for periods when she felt it was very necessary for her to be home at a stretch. I think when I first took over as executive editor I said, "Hey look, we don't want too much nepotism around the plant. You'd better knock off for a while," which she did. Then she would come back to work from time to time Paul always tried to hire her, because she was awful good.

Riess: A good writer?

Newhall: Yes, she's a good newspaper writer. We worked together on the United Nations. We had a ball.

Showing the Flag--Australia to Gibralter, 1948

Newhall: One more war story, post-war. In 1948 I had a fascinating trip around the world with the American carrier, Valley Forge. I was Sunday editor, or maybe editor of This World. Paul Smith was still the editor and general manager of the Chronicle. He'd received an invitation to make a cruise of the Pacific aboard the Valley Forge, one of the old American aircraft carriers still in service.

The navy was embarked on a kind of a pseudo-goodwill tour, and to show the flag in the Pacific Basin. They'd patched up what they called Task Force 38. Task Force 38 was a very well-known wartime navy group that had been down in the South Pacific, I believe it was under Admiral Halsey or Spruance. It was very big with the public.

Paul couldn't go, and he asked me would I like to go along? I thought that was a very nice invitation, a very gracious thing to do, and I accepted.

We flew out of here in the fall, about October, November of 1948. I left Alameda airport on one of the old Martin "Mars" seaplanes, and they were the biggest damn planes I ever saw; they were awfully big. We left from the water down there at Alameda air station and flew out to Oahu. We landed near Pearl Harbor there, on the water. This flying boat took a lot of people; it had two decks in it. It would fly at about eighty or ninety miles an hour.

It took us eighteen hours to Hawaii, and that's a long time, but we got there, stayed around for a couple of days, and then we sailed out on the Valley Forge, accompanied by four destroyers as an escort. We headed out southwest across the Pacific to Sydney, Australia, on our goodwill tour and we arrived with very little incident and were entertained very nicely by the Australians. I know I met all the publishers there. One of them was a fellow called Frank Packer, and I think there's a Sir Frank Packer or Sir Something-or-other Packer who's a big deal now in either TV r newspapers or something in Australia.

Then we went north to Hong Kong. We went up the Coral Sea and along the north coast of New Guinea. We got up towards the Philippines, and we sent all the messboys ashore in the Valley Forge fighter planes so they could visit their relatives. (You know, they're mostly Filipino messboys in the navy, all proper style.) They had a nice visit, and then we went on to Hong Kong. From Hong Kong the ship then went up to Tsingtao, which is just south of the Shantung Peninsula. It was a former German kind of colonial seaport port of entry.

The Valley Forge then received orders to go on around the world because there were Communist troubles in Italy and they wanted to show the flag there with some American warships. We proceeded from Tsingtao to Singapore, visited Singapore. We then went to Trinconmalee Harbor in Ceylon--what is now called Sri Lanka. Then we went up the Persian Gulf to entertain and again show the flag to the Arabs because Aramco, the Arabian-American oil company, was just now putting down big wells in Arabia and the oil was beginning to flow. Then we went around, up the Red Sea, through the Suez Canal, and over to Gibraltar, and stopped at Gibraltar. From Gibraltar we went up to Bergen in Norway.

At Bergen I said, "I better get back to work." So I flew back via London and Casablanca and the Azores to Patuxent, Maryland, and I flew home to California, and that was the trip.

Now, to me the remarkable thing about all this is this was in

the beginnings of the Cold War. I don't know if the Berlin Wall had been built quite yet. But everything was in kind of a tumult. These were in the absolute ashes of World War II, and the planet earth was still about the same place it was that I knew when I was much younger and traveled. The cities were about the same size, the population was about the same, and the foreign ports were faraway places with strange-sounding names. Today, as you know, everything looks like downtown Burbank or something. No matter where you go, there is no longer, from my point of view, any exotic or exciting experience in foreign travel.

Well, I had this wonderful opportunity to see the world, the pre-H-bomb world. Sydney was just recovering from the war; there's nothing to say there. Hong Kong, it was an interesting experience to sail into the harbor through these hundreds and hundreds of junks floating all over the horizon. In Hong Kong harbor there were still the masts of all the tankers and freighters that had been sunk by Japanese bombing in the harbor. There was no real recovery from the war. It was still a British colonial outpost. We went around and had tea on the veranda of the Repulse Bay Hotel where they'd kept the British prisoners--civilian prisoners the Japanese took during the war.

I asked the admiral, I said, "Look, you're going to go up to Tsingtao in three weeks. Do you mind if I leave the ship and rejoin you later?" He said fine, so I hitched a ride in a Marine plane up to Canton, and from there I picked up an Air Cathay plane--Chenault's old Flying Tiger airline, they turned it into Air Cathay --and I flew up to Shanghai.

Now, I meant to mention, while I was in Hong Kong, in the foyer of the main hotel there, the old King George Hotel or whatever it was, colonial hotel, I ran into an old buddy of mine whose name was Franc Shor, who subsequently became, I think, editor of National Geographic. I think he was editor there for quite a few years. He was sort of an old-time con man who had worked for the Chronicle a little bit; he'd been a public relations agent and so on, but he'd also spent some time in San Quentin prison for either rubber checks or something. We were pretty good friends.

Franc said, "Oh, Scott, you've got to go up to Shanghai. Chiang's on the run, and I've got the only Cadillac in China." (I don't know how he promoted it.) "My girlfriend is in the hospital" --she had hemorrhoids, and that's not becoming to a woman; to a man, maybe, but not a woman--"Will you go see her?" "I'll have the driver meet you," he said, "I can get word to Shanghai."

So I went off from Canton, flew to Shanghai, and landed. Now, I must say this was the end of '48, and just for simplistic reasons let's call them the "Red Chinese" or the "Communist Chinese"--they had gained all of China except for Peking, Tsingtao, Tientsin,

Shanghai, and Canton, I think. They were literally surrounding these cities, the Red Army, but you could fly in, still. So I flew in to Shanghai and I stayed at a place called Broadway Mansions down on the Wangpoo Creek. I just had a good time wandering around town, and I did some stories.

I sent some stories about how the Chiang Kai-Shek and the Nationalist forces were about to fold up and be run over by the Red Chinese. Our American intelligence officer there called me and he said, "Look, Mr. Newhall, I will transmit these stories of yours because we have to. After all," he said, "it's a free press. But," he said, "if only you had access to the classified information that we have here in the intelligence community, you'd know that this is all nonsense." I said, "Well, I don't think it's all that much nonsense. It looks pretty sad to me with all these Red Chinese troops outside of town."

"No," he said, "things are going to be all right. But I'll send your stories anyway." And he did, he transmitted the stories, and they were published. And of course, it was only two or three weeks before Chiang Kai-Shek got out of town with his airplane and his gold bars. Chiang used the Cadillac limousine. It was the only one in Shanghai, but I was able to use it while I was there, with the driver.

Franc was an operator; he had a country house. It was an absolute stage-set place out of House Beautiful in China, with the moon windows and the moon entrance and pavilion. I dozed off to sleep the first night I stayed out there. It had a staff, a houseboy, and the waiters, and so on. I heard all these firecrackers, you know; the Chinese were really celebrating stuff. So in the morning I said, "Hey, what was the celebration last night?" He said, "Oh, that's the Red Army. It's just out there across the other side of the field." So I left and went back to Shanghai immediately; I wasn't going to get into that. I had a very interesting time. His girlfriend, I'm happy to report, recovered, got out of the hospital.

So then I took a plane and flew up to Peking. Forgive me for talking about it so much, but it was one of the remarkable experiences of my life, to fly into Peking. The army was around it, the railroad had just been closed. There used to be a railroad up from Tientsin to Peking, and the Red Army just finished closing that off. They come around with a pincers movement. But from the plane I could see Peking, and at that time I guess it still looked the way it had been built in the fourteenth century or whenever it was built. I guess it was originally Mongol rather than Manchu, but anyway, it was a big, square city with big, big walls around it. I believe it's all different now. But at that time in 1949 you could see the whole city, just one big square-walled fortress-metropolis.

We landed, and I drove in. The stewardess was a very nice girl. She gave me their personal cards because I said, "We may have to get out of China." One of them was Shirley Liang. I forget who the other one was. Anyway, I got in the bus at the airport to get into Peking, and going through that wall was an unforgettable experience. It was one of those almost medieval walls where you go in one entrance and then you go around like an "S," an elaborate two or three curves, so nobody had a chance getting through any of those walls on foot with the old infantry. Then you get to the city gate of the wall and there you are, in the city.

I stayed at the Wagon Lits Hotel, the French Wagon Lits. One of our Chronicle fellows had become a language officer in the legation up there in Peking. His name was Gayle Anderton. And I ran into another old Chronicle-San Francisco friend, Chris Rand, who had been editor of the West Coast magazine, what do they call it? It was put out in the thirties. Doesn't matter. Coast magazine. He was one of these sort of semi-snotty guys from Harvard, Beacon Hill or the East Coast, Massachusetts. But Chris had been a Chronicle man. We were buddies. You found people you knew everywhere in the world.

We fooled around there, and I went to a banquet for China's most revered artist, but I won't bore you with that story. He sat next to me. I will only say the interpreter--. Well, it was an elaborate Chinese banquet, quite formal, and this guy's eight-five or ninety, the Robert Frost of China. I made some remarks to the interpreter about what a fine-looking old gentleman he was, and he interpreted it, and he came back to me, the interpreter, and said, "He thanks you for your compliment. He wants to know if you would like to know why he is in such good health." I said, "Yes, I would indeed." He talked to him again. He said, "It's because he has a bowel movement only once a month." [laughter] I said, "That's interesting." Then there was some more talk and he turned back to me and he said, "He had a bowel movement this morning." [laughter] Well, that's the end of that story.

After my visit with the nice Chinese poet and going around to the Imperial City and the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, which are unbelievable, or they were then, I flew down to Tsingtao. I joined the Valley Forge and we went off to Singapore, which was a Chinese city then. This was all fascinating to me. It was the exploration of the wonderful planet we're living on and the frontier, and here were all these strange-sounding people and so on. Singapore was all a one or two-story Chinatown.

They had Chinese theater and amusement parks there; I never will see the equal to them. The Chinese theaters there, the costuming was so magnificent. You've seen Chinese theater, I guess. It goes on all day, literally. You go in and they throw you the hot towels and the oranges and all this; it was great.

I got to dancing with some colonial English girls at a dance hall at one of these amusement parks. After dancing with them to "In the Mood" or some American swing song, I bowed very low to the young lady and I said, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this exquisite experience," or something along that line. The next thing I knew, she had belted me one and knocked me halfway across the room. I don't know why to this day. I think she felt I was putting her on or something. I really don't know. That's my memory of Singapore.

Okay, in Singapore we talked to Sukarno and some of those sort of Marxist guys who were getting Java or Sumatra out of the Dutch colonial hemisphere. Then we went to Trinconmalee, a wonderful, wonderful natural harbor on the northeast coast of Ceylon. I've never seen anything like it. I left the ship at the naval base there for a couple for days--the port is a little, tiny village; there really wasn't much of a harborworks--to go up and see some of the ruins.

I always wanted to go to Kandy, the capital of Ceylon. I hitched a ride from the ruins. The navy sent all the troops up to see the ruins at Polonarua. I hitched a ride with a couple of English ladies. I went up to Kandy and stayed there and saw the Buddha's Tooth pagoda, and then hitched a ride back. The interesting thing about that--again, it was 1949 by this time--when I went ashore first in Trinconmalee, the sort of village around it, a little guy came running out of the shadows to me. I don't know why; I just looked regular, I guess. He could speak English, because in Ceylon there are or were a lot of English.

He said, "You're from America, is that right?" I said, "Yes." He was a little guy, barefoot, probably. He said, "Could I get to America?" I said, "I guess so; a lot of people have." He said, "Yes, but what about this?" and he held his hands out like this. I said, "What do you mean? I don't understand." He said, "They're the wrong color." He said, "I'm not white," or something. I said, "Oh, look, you can make it, just keep trying," or something. He wasn't threatening or anything. I just mention that because it struck me at the time as to what the rest of the world must think about America and so on, and the troubles we might have been having.

You know, they had a lot of trouble in Ceylon; they still are having trouble. Ruth and I went there about four or five years ago, and we were just able to squeeze in the trip when the killing had ceased for a while. There's been a lot of violence there, and I guess that Ceylon--or Sri Lanka--is going to be violent for a long time still.

Riess: That was your only kind of incident like that?

Newhall: Oh, yes.

Riess: For the most part your encounters were with the American or English community?

Newhall: Yes. Or with the newspapers. I didn't have time, or I wasn't out on foot, you know.

I have not mentioned China--.

Riess: Yes, why did you end up feeling they were the greatest people in the world?

Newhall: Okay, I'll try to explain that. While I was in Peking at the Wagon Lits Hotel some little guy came in and said he wanted to make some clothes. Did I want to buy some clothes?

Riess: That story you told.

Newhall: Okay, well, that was it. They made them overnight. It's this Oriental work ethic and this family ethic that is so phenomenal. I went out with Chris Rand, and there were rickshaws then. I did a story on the rickshaws and the rickshaw coolies. They're something. They're all skinny and die of consumption eventually. But they work and work without stop.

Whenever traveling--and I say this advisedly--I liked to cover a house of ill fame. In Peking I sat there and I looked at the family, the girls and their lifestyle. It was a tiny family home and the mother and two daughters were doing anything to raise some money. There was a certain hospitality and pride, and utter abject, horrible, awful poverty. I figured, "These people are going to make it." I can't explain it to you, Suzanne. I had the experience of watching people selling me stuff in the markets and managing to survive while the Chinese collapsed and inflation went from 1 to 10 to 1 to 700,000. The Chinese are going to survive forever. Nobody's going to put them down. They're just too many and they will accept things, and they will survive.

I can't describe it very intelligently, but I just saw their persistence and their native hospitality. It's a remarkable culture. They're either down and resigned and they will accept it, but they don't die. They survive. If you don't have a slick Italian car in this country, or a wind-up laser-operated teddy bear when you're a kid, you're finished--. But I don't want to get into that. I'm going around the world right now.

Riess: Well, I think you're just about done.

Newhall: Okay. Well, the visit with the sheik in the Persian Gulf was pretty interesting. King Ibn-Saud was still the king, but his crown prince

was younger, King Saud. He came down to visit the ship and we took him for a ride. The story I always tell is--it takes time--he was surrounded by all these guys in robes, and a lot of black guys and stuff, and I said to one of them, I said, "You speak English?" He said, "I sure do." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Oh," he said, "I'm from Brooklyn." I said, "What do you mean? What are you doing over here?" He had a gold dagger on and the headdress. He said, "This sure as hell beats Brooklyn." [laughter] It was a funny conversation. I talked to him for a while, and he was American as I.

The king's grand vizier or something apparently got terribly seasick and fell to the deck face-down. Nobody touched him. They let him lie there. He suddenly rolled over when the ship lurched a little bit. Everybody on board the Valley Forge had been briefed that the Arabians prayed to Mecca every so often, and if any of our guests got down to pray, don't bother them, it's impolite. Well, they thought that this poor guy in robes and headdress lying on the deck was praying to Mecca. But the fellow was almost dead from some kind of vertigo. He began to vomit. They finally fixed him up and the doctors took care of him, but that was always a funny little incident.

We were entertained at one of the most memorable dinners I've ever attended, in a palace in Dahran. All this took place at a place called Ras Tanura, which is an Aramco port. There was a big party given by the crown prince for all of us on board. We went to this party. We sat down, about fifty of us, in a tent-like compound on the ground, no top. The moon came up over the desert, the air was exquisitely clear, and the guy sitting next to me was a fellow all done up in robes who turned out to be Sir John Philby. Old Sir John was a very famous Arabist who was a favorite of old King Ibn Saud, the father of the Kim Philby who defected to the Russians. Sir John began telling me about the king. "He's like my father," he said. "He calls me 'My son.' He told me about his wife. He had a wife, apparently, in England, and one in Cairo. Philby was finally, you know, told to get out, but he lasted until King Saud got in.

Then we went on through the canal, past Suez, and landed in Gibraltar, and I visited there and went up to see the Barbary Apes. You know, there's the old story about Gibraltar will be secure until the apes depart. Winston Churchill had said, "Replenish the apes." So I went up to see the apes. They're carried on the roster. Whatever it's worth, the apes are carried on the roster of the Gibraltar garrison, and they all have their ration and it's all recorded every day, what they're paid in terms of bananas or whatever they eat. I went up to pay them a call. They gave me a page out of the roster for a memorandum.

Then we went up around north of England and across the North Sea to Bergen. And then I flew home.

Changing Times

Post-war Bay Area

Riess: When you were made editor of This World was the idea that you were supposed to be making some sweeping changes?

Newhall: On the World? No, I just did the same thing. It was quite new then, and we sort of tightened it up. But basically the whole idea was there as Paul had founded it, established it.

Riess: During the war you were away a lot?

Newhall: I was away for a total of about a year that's all.

Riess: But you were part of the team that was really home keeping the Chronicle going?

Newhall: Oh, yes. A girl, a woman, Carolyn Stull her name was, from Marin County, was editor of the World while I was gone. She was a really smart girl. She went to work on the Ex later on. She started out as an assistant to Joseph Henry Jackson, a secretary in the book department.

Riess: After the war a lot of people came out to the Bay Area who had been here during the war and thought it would be a wonderful place to return to.

Newhall: Oh yes, that certainly happened. That was the end of California.

Riess: In a sense it was a great leap forward. You say it was the end, though.

Newhall: Well, what's a leap forward? I don't know. It was, in a sense. During the war so many hundreds of thousands of young people had come through San Francisco particularly, and California generally, that this is where they wanted to come home to after the war and enjoy the freedom and excitement. They went home, I guess, to one winter back in Minnesota or Michigan or something, and then they came back out here. So this was the discovery of California, even more dramatically perhaps than the discovery of gold in 1849. And out they came.

There's an old saying: when you go to war, if you join the navy, the regular navy's always in charge. If you join the army, the regular army is soon submerged under the mass of volunteers and civilians who come in and take over. Well, California remained in

charge of its own soul and fate for about twelve, fifteen years after the war. And then in the sixties that was the end of it. I mean, San Francisco is no longer controlled by San Franciscans. It's kind of a melange of god-knows-what. And California is just a big bouillabaisse or something of middle-westerners and people from all over the country. There's no longer, I think, any feeling of local identity out here. This city itself-I could not describe to you San Francisco today very well, I really couldn't. As a matter of fact, I was talking about it at lunch. Well anyway, I'm wandering around too much.

What San Francisco Was

Riess: Well, describe the San Francisco that was.

Newhall: San Francisco was, I think, a remarkable, remarkable community I've always said, it was a state of mind, it was a legend, it was a fairy tale. And San Francisco--I'm talking now about geographical San Francisco, forty-nine square miles at the tip of this little peninsula--was the bright light or the centerpiece of this whole Bay Area. And when people used to travel--I lived for a long time in Berkeley, and I've lived in San Rafael--and when people abroad asked, "Where did you come from?" I would always write "San Francisco" on the hotel register, or something like that, because people knew where San Francisco was.

San Francisco was a mining town, it was not a farm town, and it was a real international seaport. Therefore the mores of the community were very permissive. Saturday night was always a big night. People were allowed to go their own way. The citizens of San Francisco--you know the turbulent history of the city. And we were all very proud of it, we were all a part of it.

This was a city made up of four or five ethnic groups. There were Irish Catholics, Italian Catholics, a very strong Jewish community, a few blacks and a few Latinos. And San Francisco was controlled, generally speaking, by an amalgam between what they now call blue-collar or whatever, South of Market, Irish Catholic population, the machinists and the boilermakers and the firemen and the policemen and all that. And some San Franciscans called themselves Irishmen, or others called themselves Italians, or Jews, or they called themselves this, that, or the other. And they loved each other, or at least they respected one another as "San Franciscans."

Now I'm talking in generalities, I know. When I landed in Londonderry on my way back from the war, the minute I walked into the officer's club there a couple of guys came running up. One of

them said, "Hey, Scott, you're from San Francisco." (I don't know how they found out.) He said, "My father was Judge Alden Ames." Well, I knew Judge Ames because we used to take pictures of him in town in his courtroom in the old Hall of Justice. And the other fellow who came up was the captain of the hospital in Londonderry, Captain Bryson Parry Davis from Mill Valley. He said, "Oh, my god, we've got to have a meeting." Just coming from this city, there was this camaraderie.

Good fellowshp is--I suppose the same thing might happen in Dayton, I don't know. But people loved this city, they were proud of each other, they liked each other. And they all made a point of being very sort of casual and cavalier and going their own way and talking about the good old days. Some of the guys went to Mission High, some of the guys went to San Francisco State or USF, and some of the guys went east to Lawrenceville. Hell, you were all sort of pals.

There was not then this terrible sort of egocentric quality which you see now in so many people in San Francisco, where they have come to this city because it was permissive. Now these tiresome people who came here in recent years because it was permissive are insisting that the city must be cast in their mold. There's a whole different spirit about this place. God knows where all these people have come from.

I started to say that the Board of Supervisors, which sort of controlled the city, and the mayors, the executive branch, and the newspapers, and the Pacific Union Club played a great part in it, and Montgomery Street, all sort of in this symbiotic relationship.

In the past, for example, you'll see the chiefs of police were either Irish, or sometimes Italian, but mostly Irish. A lot of Italians and Irish in the fire department. The Scavenger's Association were men of great substance here. They were mostly Italian. The fishermen were Italian. But they were all San Franciscans. And it wasn't an ethnic slur to call a guy by what his family heritage was.

Now you have to be careful about names, or ethnic derivations and racial ancestry and such, or at least you should be. And it's kind of sad. I think it's very sad. As I've described it a little in San Rafael, there was a caste system and a feudal state here. This is a very strange city. But now the women have to join the clubs, and I don't know, you've got all this business. You have to be careful about what you say.

Riess: You didn't mention any Asian population as part of it.

Newhall: Oh well, that was marvelous. That was the best part of it all. But they were totally separate, historically, you know, because of the

McClatchy newspaper in the Central Valley, and because of the "yellow peril" that Hearst papers manufactured. There had been this very stringent immigration policy. And San Francisco Chinatown was quite a place. Everybody loved it. When I say everybody loved it, what the hell, I mean I loved it. It was colorful.

I was driving back from lunch today, and as I got here I drove past the old Chinese telephone exchange. Now the Chinese telephone exchange--the operators were all there, outside in the street you could hear them clacking away, but they never had any numbers. People would call up and ask by name, you know. And they would track down anybody you wanted anywhere in Chinatown. You would call them up and ask for Mr. Wang, and if you could make them understand which Mr. Wang you wanted, you got him. But now, of course, it's all on computers. And they're all calling themselves Asians and they all get hurt if you call them orientals or some damn thing. I don't know what the vernacular is, I really don't, and I don't give a damn about it one way or another.

1960s Permissiveness

Riess: You said it ended twelve years after the war--that makes it up to about 19--.

Newhall: In the sixties or late fifties, I think. You know, the flower children and all this psychedelic business. That's because we were very permissive then. And you know, we're not that permissive anymore. Because you got a mayor in there who's always trying to get the votes from the homosexuals or whatever it is, whatever minority group, the blacks or Asians. San Francisco is becoming a city that has no flavor, honestly, except just as a troubled city. It's a troubled city.

The low point of San Francisco--I'm really rambling now, I'm sorry--but the low point of San Francisco in my experience was the night that George Moscone and Harvey Milk were assassinated. I have never seen the city in a greater agony. Oh, god!. I was living in the south then, but I happened to be here that day.

And then the night they had the riot when they let Dan White off. It was a city that was truly schizophrenic. It was awful. Now I think we're climbing back up out of it some. But that was a terible time, just a terrible time. And I don't know all the answers, I can't tell too much about it because I don't know the whole story, but I do know that George Moscone had been a very good friend of mine at the Chronicle. We had more or less put him in Sacramento, but something happened to him and it was awful. I'm sorry, this is really--I went down a cul-de-sac there, I'll get back

out of it.

Riess: Was there a way in which you were using the paper to try to reverse these trends?

Newhall: I don't know when it all started, but this was my destiny. I had enormous respect for the old gentleman, old William Randolph Hearst himself. I never met him. I knew some of his kids pretty well, but I perceived the Hearst papers as something evil. I'm sorry to use that word.

The Hearst press with its "yellow peril," with its stories about Marion Davies' anti-vivisection hoopla and all this stuff, it was a fake newspaper. And it was written just to keep the working man, in my opinion now, in ignorance. The superstitious lower class, bread-and-butter, lunchbox San Francisco working man--it was a paper that he could read, so he would read about things like ghosts clanking their chains in English castles, you know, and about the playboy who gave a mink coat to every other chorus girl in Minsky's. This was no way to put out a newspaper!

I thought all right, I'm going to change it. Perhaps I got in the newspaper business by mistake or accident, but then I saw what was going on. And of course I'm sure I was motivated a little bit because Bill Wren, the then managing editor of the Examiner in 1935, refused to give me a job. Well, the crazy people at the Chronicle hired me. And naturally I was seized with contempt for the Hearst people. Probably back then I thought, "We're going to finish these guys off."

I figured the Chronicle had to be successful and the city had to have a paper that would amuse, entertain, and inform, and save people from the perdition of Hearstian ignorance. It's all kind of confusing the way it comes out, but these are some of my feelings. So when Paul Smith got into all this trouble and things turned out so badly for him and he left, and I had an oportunity, I had talked to Charles Thieriot, who was the emerging heir apparent to the deYoung family and so on. I don't know how much of this I've said before.

Riess: I think we're getting into the beginning of a new story.

Paul Smith, Continued

Dinner Guests

Riess: Let's go on to how you took over from Paul Smith.

Newhall: I haven't been able to say too much about Paul because there's so much to say, and there's not enough time in the world. But while Paul was here, he was the Chronicle. He was the dog who was wagging the deYoung family tail. During his period in San Francisco he lived up on Telegraph Hill in this little apartment and he held court to people who came through town. So many people, I can't remember them all, the Chinese lobby guys, the Soongs and Hu Shih, the Chinese sage.

I've often wondered if there's a truly educated Chinese sage in the world, but anyway the Dr. Hu, the wise old man, came by. And I remember in the middle of dessert he turned and he said--this is when the communists, the Chinese Reds, whatever you want to call them, were attacking--and he said, "Do you know that they are raping our Chinese men? The womens brigades are raping the men in the streets in China!" Now this guy, as I say, he was Mr. China.

Vince Mahoney, sitting next to me, was an editorial writer for the Chronicle. There was this loud silence, and Vince turned and said, "Excuse me, Your Excellency, would you repeat that please?" And he said, "Yes, the Communist women's brigade come into Tsingtao, and they roam through the streets raping these men and there was a terrible scene." [chuckles] There was no more conversation on that subject at the dinner table. I'm not sure what really happened in the streets of Tsingtao, but anyway.

And, oh, Anthony Eden was there. One of the great memories I have of him--I happened to be sitting next to him at dinner. Then England was still recognizing China and we had gone through this silly business with Nixon and Knowland, cutting our relations with China, severing our relations, which was the silliest damn thing that was ever done. And Eden at some point turned to me--here I was a little guy hustling around with This World or something--and he said, "You know, I think we're very unpopular in America because we're still recognizing the Chinese."

I said, "No, you're not. That was the smartest thing you ever did. And even so, you're still popular with me. That's all that matters." He said, "Well, that's very encouraging." I remember that conversation. Anyway, here he was, and he became Prime Minister after that. Oh, yes--I also remember a dinner up at Paul's when I won some money from Randolph Churchill. He had some problems usually, but that night his worst problem was that he gave me 2 to 1 odds that in five flips of a coin the sme face would not come up three times in a row.

Riess: And why did he visit Paul Smith?

Newhall: Because everybody did. Anybody who came to town. Like when you're in India you visit the Taj Mahal.

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Riess: You don't need an invitation to get to the Taj Mahal. How do you get to Paul's?

Newhall: Well, if you're Anthony Eden or Hu Shih or if you're Chiang Kai-shek or Madame Chiang, you get invited, I guess. He had three secretaries, and most guys only need one.

Riess: Was he like the Gettys are now, maybe?

Newhall: I really don't know anything about the Gettys, except they have a name and they're always entertaining.

Riess: Well, is there any equivalent to Paul Smith that you can think of?

Newhall: No, no. I've never known an equivalent of Paul. Maybe Henry Luce.

See, the Gettys can't do anything for Anthony Eden except maybe lend him money. And Paul could perhaps marshal the forces of San Francisco, in a way, to back the British policy. I mean, Robert Frost was there, Carl Sandburg, Clare Luce, these rich Texans. I don't know, everybody came through.

Riess: How could he afford to entertain them?

Newhall: Uncle George had a lot of money.

Riess: He was backing this.

Newhall: Yes, sure. Paul would charge it off to the paper. As I say, Paul lived high, in his own way. But he could get away with it. He knew people and they knew him. What he says in his book I think is about 100 percent accurate. Doesn't he drop all these names, going through the book?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Yes. And they all went to this little tiny apartment up here on Telegraph Hill and had dinner served by the two houseboys, Jimmy and Cliff. Everyone sat around and drank a lot of scotch.

The Chronicle's Reputation

Riess: And what was the fallout of all that for San Francisco?

Newhall: What did San Francisco get?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Oh, it got a lot of conversation at the Bohemian and the P.U. clubs about what a son-of-a-bitch Paul was, you know, about how he was the showboat who was lording it over San Francisco. Paul was on this fantastic--I hate to use the word--power trip. He had started from nowhere and he was going to get to the pearly gates, one way or another, whatever the pearly gates were at the time. He was going to get to the summit. He often considered himself as being presidential material. Paul had a way about him. Believe me, this guy was amazing. I keep coming back to it; I've never seen anything like it in my life. You know I can kid people along in a pinch. But this guy was a grand master.

And people came to San Francisco thinking that the Chronicle was the most important newspaper in the world, I'm sure; they were convinced that Paul was the smartest and richest publisher that the world had ever seen. And of course, neither one of them was true. Well he might have been the smartest, but nothing else was true. The Chronicle was a little old paper in San Francisco, and its influence was, oh, so-so. Oh, it always had a loyal and odd following. I remember during the war, in London, there was a little old man in the British Museum, I walked by him, and somehow I told him I was from the San Francisco Chronicle. He said, "Oh, come and see your newspaper. We keep it on file here, it's very important." So I took a look. This was when the bombs were falling. [laughter] Anyway.

The Pressure on Newhall

Riess: [laughter] In fact, when you sat at those dinners did you say, "I'd like to be like Paul Smith."

Newhall: No. I think I said, "Jesus god, please don't ever let me get into this situation." There's too much pressure. And my life was difficult. Rudolf Hess, you may remember, during the war finally jumped in a plane and got out of Germany. Well, I often considered jumping into a plane and getting out of Fifth and Mission, because Paul was a very demanding person. And he needed attention, and he needed backup and people to be on hand whenever he wanted.

Riess: And you were involved with him in many ways.

Newhall: I felt at times a lot of pressure trying to live up to what Paul was demanding, in a sense. I was trying to run the damn paper, I mean This World or the Sunday part. And all of a sudden there would be a phone call, "Hey, we're having a party, come on up." And I thought,

"Jesus," you know--excuse my language--but anyway. it was pressure.

Riess: Did he read the whole paper?

Newhall: He read more of it than I would have. A lot of people didn't have time to read everything they've published. Believe me they don't. Other people read everything. I can't stand reading anything I've either written or anything afterwards. I really don't. Paul read it, I think, quite well.

Flickering Flame

Newhall: Now, getting back to the original purpose of this, after the war Paul came back and I said the flame on the candle or the skyrocket or whatever was flickering somewhat more dimly, if something can flicker dimly. Anyway, it was flickering. "Dimly" I guess is a redundancy. Something was troubling him. He'd gone into the navy as a lieutenant commander, he'd gone into the marines as a second lieutenant and came back to the navy after his stint in the marines. It was the unusual, you know, Paul Smith saga.

But something happened out in the Pacific. I may have an idea what happened, but I'm not sure. He was a different man, in a sense, when he came back. Suddenly something had jolted him. I mentioned that the experience of war hits men differently. But it can hit some men very hard.

So he began drinking more, but it wasn't in the terms of an alcoholic. He was, I think, removing himself to a certain extent. And he began traveling. He kept going to New York or Washington, and when he did, he would take two or three secretaries with him. And then he made a trip or two around the world. Some of this is, I suppose, a little personal. But anyway, the eagles or the bloodhounds of the IRS were after him for taxes. And oh, gee, he had been living so high and so fast, as they say now, "on the fast track," that it was catching up to him.

He was paying less and less attention to the paper and thinking more and more about Paul's career, his own career. And this bothered me. I'm being very frank in all this, but anyway. Paul was not the publisher or the editor or general manager (or whatever title he was using) that he had been before. He was still looking for--what is left? His karma. You know, he was asking, "Where am I going?" And I think he felt that the Chronicle--I think psychically he knew he had finished with that particular chapter or passage of his life.

He went on a trip around the world once or twice. I remember he was in a little plane crash in Formosa, one of Chiang Kai-shek's planes, anyway that's what he said. And while he was gone, oh my lord, the people began closing in on him. The paper was beginning to lose copious amounts of money then. It was losing about a million or better dollars a year, and that was a lot of money in 1952. And Larry Fanning and I, and Dorothy McCarthy, his secretary, were terribly worried about this. So were Uncle George and the family. They were getting older. And Charlie Theiriot was coming on.

There was never this big feud that people might have tried to say existed between Charlie and Paul or anything. But the deYoung family were bugging Uncle George. They were really jiggling his cue, because the Chronicle was losing money and they felt Uncle George wasn't doing anything about it.

Crisis: Debts, Taxes

Newhall: And the debts were mounting up. We were in terrible shape. Our circulation was slipping; the paper was not good in terms of being a success from a circulation standpoint. Our circulation slipped from a high of maybe 170-80-90,000 daily down to about 150-145,000 daily. Inevitably Uncle George was going to have to make a decision, let Paul go or do something. I remember, Paul came back and Larry and I went down and grabbed him at the airport before anybody else could get to him to tell him what had lined up. And I'm sorry, my memory --I can't tell you what all it was, but I do remember he had a significant tax problem. Oh, people were after him, I guess, politically, and so on.

Finally--this was now around Thanksgiving time, 1952, and Paul was living in this strange half-world or something. These kids were still coming in from nowhere and saying to the city editor, "Hey, I met Mr. Smith at a party and he said I had a job." My god, we had two or three guys a week come in. So the family was insisting that George do something about this, put an end to it and get the Chronicle in a money-making situation. It was obviously the end for Paul. Uncle George said, "Paul, you've got to cut so many people from the Chronicle staff. You've got to do this, you've got to save this money."

Paul said, "Well, I'm going to handle it my way." He held a staff meeting and said, "I've been told that I have to fire ten, twenty people," or something, "and I'm not going to do it. I'm going to back you all up." And in the end, that was the end. He made his choice and he left.

Newhall's Position

Newhall: To sort of wrap all this up in a very medium-sized paragraph, I knew Uncle George pretty well. I had known him pretty well all along, during the war and so on, and I would see him socially every now and then I wrote him a note, a memorandum. (I knew Charlie Thieriot pretty well, too.) When Paul left I wrote a note--I probably have a copy of it somewhere. I said, "This paper is in such terrible condition, it will not survive. And unless"--oh god, I don't know how I phrased it; I didn't say, "unless I can participate," or "unless it is worked out to my satisfaction," that's not the way I worded it--"unless I can be assured that the Chronicle will have an opportunity of success, I must dissociate myself from the Chronicle." So Charlie and Uncle George said, "Oh, geez, you don't want to go. Would you like to help run the paper or something."

Charlie was assistant publisher. I talked with Charlie. Charles is a very close and dear friend. He's totally different from Paul, but we were very close and became very close. I said, "Okay, if we can work this out together, but I have to have a free hand. Because I just can't go along and always be frustrated because there's somebody behind my back." I said, "This paper is in too critical a condition." Paul had left by this time, and he knew what I had done. I think I sent him a copy of the memo and so on.

Riess: Were you really the heir-apparent?

Newhall: No, not at all. Not at all. Charlie was. And he functioned as such anyway, you know.

Riess: But if anyone had looked around the paper, would you have been the obvious person?

Newhall: I can't answer that. I don't think so. I figured this was all kind of my idea, and I was playing it by ear. I was winging it. I don't know. I felt so deeply about the Chronicle. I mean, really, the Chronicle was my own, it was my life. Hearst was still ahead of us. They were rich, and we were losing. I felt this could be done and I thought, I'd like a shot at it.

Riess: It was a mission for you. Bill German and Abe Mellinkoff, they were all there, Larry Fanning.

Newhall: Oh, yes. We were all buddies, you know, really.

Riess: But you reached out for it.

Newhall: Well, I was sort of closer to Paul and closer to the deYoung family,

I guess. I don't know. Really, it's very difficult for me to answer that question. I can't tell you. Paul had asked me to sit in on the editorial conference for the last year or so. But I was no heir-apparent as such.

Riess: But you were being groomed for it.

Newhall: I don't think so. I never heard of it, really. But I guess just a lot of people knew me, and maybe they figured this was perhaps the least of a lot of evils. I really don't know. But anyway, Charlie did come in and talk with Uncle George and me. So we worked it out. I would be executive editor, Charlie was going to be assistant publisher, and together we were going to set the world on fire.

The Watchdog Committee##

[Interview 4: April 7, 1988]

Newhall: You had asked the question, had I been an heir apparent or something like that, and I said, no, I was just going along. I thought a little bit--memories came back up about those last few days in the fall of 1952 when Paul was leaving and before the Chronicle's hierarchy was changed around, and an incident or a situation which I had more or less forgotten occurred to me.

In the spring and summer of 1952 when Paul was off traveling around the world trying to forget his troubles here, and the Chronicle was floundering in terms of its revenues and losses and so on, Paul agreed that he would set up what he called a Watchdog Committee, to sort of review things and to make suggestions as to how the situation internally in the Chronicle could be improved.

This was indeed established, and I was a member of it, along with Al Denny who was the controller. [pauses to think] My memory begins to falter right there. Al was there; Paul himself, of course; Larry Fanning might have been. He was the managing editor at the time. And the advertising manager, Bill Phelan, and the circulation department would have been represented probably by C.E. Gilroy. We met once or twice a week and sort of would go over things.

This Watchdog Committee never really came to anything, except at that time I remember I began talking more and more, being I suppose one would have thought bumptious. But I have sometimes a sort of low threshold of boredom, and I like to kid around a little bit. I became more and more talkative. Paul was away a good deal of the time, and I was trying to be kind of protective when he was there. It was a difficult time.

And I remember I ran into Uncle George coming to work one morning. We were out in the hall and he said, "Oh, by the way, how are you doing on the Coast Guard?" I shook my head. I said, "Well, it's just getting along fine as far as I know, Uncle George." [chuckles] And I went on back to work. I suddenly realized what he had meant was the Watchdog Committee, but he said the Coast Guard. Well, I tell that only that Uncle George was at times kind of vague. He was such a sweetie as far as we were concerned, such a nice old guy.

Anyway, I've already mentioned about how things really just finally got to a terrible situation. Paul would not fire the people. And I don't say I disagree with him at all; he just couldn't. He left.

VI SCOTT NEWHALL'S CHRONICLE

The "Single Focused Energy"

Riess: In the meantime was the Examiner getting to be a better paper?

Newhall: No, the Examiner was dying.

Riess: You said that the Chronicle's circulation was going down. So if it was going down, then the Examiner's was going up?

Newhall: You asked if the Examiner was a better paper. Well, their circulation went up to about 212,000--I believe they were always ahead of us in circulation--but they were a terrible paper. That was why I knew we could knock them off.

I can wrap up my whole journalistic career in San Francisco in one sentence. The public doesn't realize that the Chronicle didn't kill the Examiner, the Examiner committed suicide. And this is a fact. We perhaps helped them aim the dagger, admittedly.

The Examiner was dead, you see. Old W.R. Hearst had died, and so his papers were still in the hands of his hatchet men or his publishers, and the old guard. And there was this enormous overbearing Hearst Corporation in New York, so that the poor San Francisco Examiner never had a chance. It was aimless. There was no chance for a personality to emerge and direct that paper. And no truly successful newspaper can ever be published or edited by a committee. It has to reflect a single, focused energy or imagination or whatever. It has to. And you can go through paper after paper and find that. A newspaper will grow, some of them, but then when the original founders disappear or fade away, the paper becomes amorphous. A drifting or dead newspaper is like eating mashed potatoes instead of, you know, some fine roast squab in wine sauce or something like that.

Riess: Did the people of San Francisco know that they were reading a paper that was edited by Paul Smith in the same way that later they knew

they were reading Scott Newhall's paper?

Newhall: They knew they were reading a paper edited by Paul Smith because his name appeared in the paper every day on the masthead. He had stories under his by-line in it, he made speeches, he attracted attention to himself.

And now that you ask the question, it occurs to me, my name never appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle anywhere, on the masthead or--oh, once in a while on a by-line toward the end, if I covered some special event and wrote a story or something. But that was not my style. I don't mean to say I hid behind a curtain somewhere.

Riess: Yes, but people knew you.

Newhall: Don't ask me why. I can't answer that. I got a lot of publicity by people damning the Chronicle and damning me for putting out the worst paper in the United States of America. But Paul promoted himself. This is where he tripped up and fell down. In the end he was promoting Paul and not the Chronicle.

I promoted only the Chronicle all my life, I promise you. I went along, I'm sure, and got a lot of freebies on the way. Time magazine and other people, you know, they look for personalities. They like to tell stories in terms of personalities. And Charlie Thieriot was very self-effacing, he just couldn't--. I used to go out and make a few speeches once in a while, but it wasn't about Scott or his experiences, it was about the Chronicle, if anything. And the Chronicle was not my paper. It belonged to the deYoung family. When Paul was there it was his paper, but the deYoungs happened to hold the stock. I mean, there was a basic difference.

Charles deYoung Thieriot

Newhall: I had known Charlie Thieriot on and off, you know, around. Not only at the paper but once in a while socially at parties, something like that.

Riess: He had had no official role on the paper?

Newhall: He had some. He had always been very nice to me. But Paul had put him in charge of the television station. And Paul, I will say for him, because sometimes the history does tend to fog things up a bit, Paul himself had been very instrumental in acquiring the Channel 4 television franchise for San Francisco. This was one of the first franchises in San Francisco. There were then three basic channels, 4, 5, and 7. But then he had delegated--I imagine with some

pressure from the family or Uncle George--delegated to Charlie the responsibility for running the station. And Channel 4--KRON TV--began to make money. Because a television license in 1948 was, as someone described it, simply a license to steal. You couldn't lose money on a television station. And Charlie had done quite well with KRON and set up his establishment there.

Then when Paul left, about Thanksgivingtime of 1952, Charlie was named assistant to the publisher. I was given the title of executive editor--or briefly operations manager. And Charlie and I talked together a great deal about how we wanted to operate this newspaper to try to save it, or at least keep it afloat. We agreed absolutely that this was to be sort of a joint operation. He would do nothing I was not aware of, and I at the same time would do nothing he was not aware of. It had to be sort of a single operation because our funds were limited.

The Chronicle at that time, to be repetitive, was about 140,000 daily. The Ex was about 212,000, as I recall. All these things can be looked up on the ABC records, Audit Bureau of Circulation records. The Call-Bulletin, which was the Hearst afternoon paper, and the News, which was the Scripps-Howard afternoon paper, were still alive. The Oakland Post-Enquirer had already folded. That was a Hearst paper in Oakland. The Oakland Tribune, however, was I think number two in terms of circulation in the Bay Area. It was the Examiner, the Trib, the Call-Bulletin, and finally the Chronicle and the News about neck-in-neck, around 140-some-odd thousand. Maybe it went down to 139.

So Charlie and I began this long relationship. We were of an age, by the way, I think only a few months apart in age. Charles deYoung Thieriot was the grandson of Mike deYoung. His mother, who had been Kathleen deYoung, married Ferdinand Thieriot, of French derivation of sorts. Charles had been brought up, particularly during the Depression, in France. He was totally bilingual. During World War II he had served as a language officer, after Normandy and in Paris and in France. But he had come back and had gone to work on the paper and ended up with the TV station.

Charlie had total responsibility, and he was very good at it, of trying to organize the finances. I remember I went over one Saturday and met with Charlie. This was right in the beginning. I said, "Charlie, I have to understand what you have to work with. What have we got? Is there backing here?" So he sat down. He always had good handwriting, very careful handwriting. So he listed the Chronicle assets. And at that time the Chronicle assets as I recall were the Chronicle itself, the San Francisco Chronicle, daily and Sunday, Channel 4, the TV station, KRON-TV; the deYoung Building in San Francisco, down across from the Hearst Building at Third and Market; and something-or-other called the Castillia or Castilja Corporation, which held some real estate in New York City and among

them something-or-other called the "Castilja Building," halfway downtown in Manhattan. And that wasn't much financial backing for the problem that we were faced with.

Painful Job of Firing

Riess: Was the problem meeting salaries?

Newhall: Uncle George and the Chronicle had good credit, of course, so I never experienced any problems of meeting the payroll. The deYoung family had a good line of credit with the Crocker Bank. But now that you bring that up, the payroll had really grown rather remarkably. So the most unpleasant job of my life, and certainly my most unpleasant job with the Chronicle, was the fact that I was responsible for cutting back the staff; in other words, firing. In the first few days, I had to discharge thirty or forty--it ended up being I think fifty-four people--all on the editorial side. These were a few youngsters, but also a lot were older gentlemen who had worked there and really had served their time. The Chronicle was dying. It had all these young guys who had come to work, and older guys who were never replaced. And we just couldn't afford it.

Riess: So the firing hadn't happened under Paul?

Newhall: No, he said he wouldn't do it. And he couldn't have. What the hell, it was a good way for him to go, because even if he had, he couldn't have lived with it. And the Chronicle as an institution meant more to me, the Chronicle, than any individual. Now you can say Paul has perhaps by far the greater vision here. I mean, he stands perhaps with more stature. But I felt if we don't do this painful surgery, well, the Chronicle will not survive. And it wouldn't have, I promise you. They might have sold it, of course. But then everything would have changed and we might all have been fired anyway. Some people were offering ten, twenty million dollars for it. Lord, what a bargain that would be--now. But then, it wouldn't have been such a good bargain.

Riess: But fifty-four people off the payroll was enough to clean up the negative cash flow?

Newhall: I think it was fifty-four. That's the figure I've used. I remember Larry Fanning fired some of them. He stayed on as managing editor. I was executive editor. It was a little difficult because Larry had been, in a sense, senior to me, and we were awfully good friends. It's difficult, these situations. In the end I had to let Larry go, because Larry was pretty much of a doctrinaire liberal, whatever. And I saw the Chronicle being a little different. But that was after about a year or so.

Now this was 1952, I repeat, and there was no serious unionization at that time, although there was a guild. But there were no medical plans, no retirement plans, no serious pension plans. There was only severance pay for the people who had to leave.

Some of these people had a fatherly image as far as I was concerned, and to have to sit down with them and consign them perhaps to penury--it was very difficult for them mostly, but also very difficult for me. We tried to work out some way that they could continue to survive. Some of them had a little money. They had their severance pay. And we tried to work out on an individual basis anything so that life would be livable or bearable. And it was very difficult. I had great respect for some of them, but they were absolutely no use to the paper in terms of its survival.

An indication of the superannuation of the Chronicle staff was that the average age in our composing room--and we must have had sixty, seventy, eighty people there--was sixty-six. Now, that's a little senior. Something had to be done, and everybody had just let it slide for a couple of generations. There were no serious retirement plans at the Chronicle, but I felt that if the Chronicle was to survive we had to make these cuts and then get about our business and change the perceptions of the San Francisco newspaper reader as to what the Chronicle was.

The Community of Readers

Newhall: The Chronicle was just flat. It was dull. No matter what anyone says, it was dull. And nobody really wanted to read it much. There was a lot of bad talk around town. And philosophically or psychologically, the problem facing any newspaper editor or publisher is not what his newspaper is but rather what people think his newspaper is. Therefore we had to reorganize the paper, reform it, do whatever we were going to do, refurbish it, and then convince people that this has indeed happened and that they were in fact reading the greatest paper that had ever been published. I'm exaggerating a little, but it's true. There's no use putting out the New York Times unless the people who are available as clients realize that the New York Times is a fine paper. It's just no use.

And the word around the Bay Area in 1952 was, "One: Paul Smith had left, therefore the Chronicle was going to die. Two: The Chronicle is a terrible newspaper, trash, not worth looking at or reading. Therefore let's turn elsewhere." And this is what we had to go to work to conquer.

Riess: So the Examiner had its readers by default.

Newhall: Well, the Examiner had all the old Hearst readers. They were the horse-race crowd and so on and so forth. And again, this was the old yellow-peril, white-supremacy crowd; the ever-conservative or reactionary American working man. It was kind of the conservative Democratic party crowd.

Riess: Did you want to get them reading your paper, or did you want nothing to do with that crowd?

Newhall: Oh hell, we had to get anybody we could, and you know, change their whole lifestyle if necessary.

Riess: In other words, they didn't have to apply to read the Chronicle. [laughs]

Newhall: No, no, we were after anybody and everybody, and not only in San Francisco, but in the whole area surrounding. San Francisco after all is simply the Camelot of the Bay Area. San Francisco was purely a fantasy, a legend. But everybody, generally speaking, in Berkeley, Mill Valley, down the Peninsula, Oakland, wants to identify themselves with San Francisco. And that's why in the end they all had to read the San Francisco Chronicle. San Francisco has always been a touchstone. It is a fairyland. I mentioned, you know, that when Bay Area people travel they say they're from San Francisco, and not from Vallejo, or Sonoma or Redwood City and such.

Riess: Did you have an idea in mind for how to get readers when you came in in 1952?

Newhall: Pretty much. I felt strongly in the last few years that the horizon was unlimited for the Chronicle. Somebody could put out a paper that would absolutely captivate the people in San Francisco.

Forgetting for the moment the news itself, the correspondents, the stock market tables and baseball box score, a newspaper is basically, or should reflect the life of any community. It is the only means--and you can almost forget TV in this respect--newspapers are the only means that people have for communicating with or relating to each other in a community. A paper is like the water well in an old-time medieval or ancient rural country town, the well that people go to for their water. Well, everyone has to go to their newspaper for their intellectual or cultural neighborhood water. This is the role of a newspaper. I'm just preaching.

Riess: It sounds like a kind of one-way communication.

Newhall: No, you have to serve as the catalyst so that people can communicate among themselves, basically. You're the bulletin board.

Riess: Letters to the editor, but you don't mean that.

American Primitive Appetites

Newhall: Well, let's put it this way, I had more or less refined my approach toward journalism in terms of a typical Bay Area family, husband and wife, happily or unhappily married, maybe with a few children. And if they are unable to communicate with each other it's not a successful marriage, not a successful family. But if they come down to the breakfast table and the Chronicle is there, and they split it or share it, they don't have to look at each other and say, "God, you look awful this morning, honey," or whatever it is, or something. They can say, "Hey! Did you see in the Chronicle here that South Africa just incarcerated twenty more Zulus!" I mean, if you give people something to talk to each other about, to have a joint experience--I perhaps did not describe it too well, but--.

Riess: You raise the question of which parts of the paper the husband picks up, and which part the wife picks up, too.

Newhall: But in the end we had to put out a paper so they'd all reach for everything. We tried to. Usually people put out the sports for the men, you know, and the "women's world" it used to be for the women and all that. But in the end you find that both men and women all read the same stories about sex, they all read stories about violence, and they'll all read gossip. It's a fact.

Now I am a little bit rambling philosophically, but so many editors think, "Okay we want the children to read our paper so we'll put out a children's or an adolescent page." And that is nonsense. The adolescent doesn't give a damn what's happening with another adolescent, he wants to know what's happening in the red-light district among the adults. This is a fact.

The dullest and most unsuccessful pages in any newspaper I've ever had anything to do with are pages that are aimed basically for one audience or another. You'll find today that as many women as men probably do read the business page or should--maybe half as many women--but they read it. And editors nowadays have tuned up the so-called women's pages. Now they call these female departments "people" or "lifestyle" or some other cruddy kind of title. Many men will read that, too. Don't make a mistake.

I felt that the Chronicle, if it was to survive, had to be this rather magical product that was delivered to every home between about 100 and 2,000 feet above sea level. I'll get into the demographics later on.

Riess: And it had to come in the morning.

Newhall: It had to be in the morning, you're quite right. San Francisco, and

most American cities are morning newspaper towns.

But back to the future in San Francisco, when I took over I was convinced that all our Chronicle readers should be able to participate in the glorious experience of being in San Francisco, or living in the penumbra of San Francisco at least. I'm being very specific now. This is the San Francisco Chronicle I'm speaking of, and not Kansas City or St. Louis. We had this wonderful city of San Francisco to merchandise. And we had a copyright on it. The Examiner's old trademark had expired, the Ex was still floundering around with an old version of San Francisco that really wasn't quite the same.

And I should hasten to say that no newspaper, good newspaper anyway, was going to be successful unless it had a very active, progressive as far as I was concerned, liberal editorial thrust, that it made a serious attempt to cover the news and to keep San Franciscans in communication, not only with each other, but also with the rest of the world. So what we had to do was to put out a package in which all the news--I'm shortening up these theories--that mattered, or that was important or interesting, was presented briefly so people could read it.

Most people are only semi-articulate and semi-literate. Most people are children. Most of them believe in fairy tales, particularly the American people. Therefore we had to put out a newspaper that took into consideration these rather primitive or adolescent appetites of the American reader.

Riess: Really? What do you mean by fairy tales?

Newhall: Well, I'll tell you. If you want me to discuss it, I will. What my own philosophy is--in my experience in the newspaper business--Americans, particularly American women (and men now, there is no difference)want to read Rumpelstiltskin, Little Red Riding Hood, the princess marries the page or the prince marries the pretty working girl. Americans, particularly, are living in never-never land, and they continue to do so.

Working for a newspaper as a photographer, for example, you are sent out on a story about some prostitute, say, who's run in for rolling a customer or something like that. Well, any cameraman or reporter worth his salt, if he wants his picture or story to be run, is going to try and find out that the prostitute has really got a heart of gold, or she has a master's degree in comparative literature, but because of hard times she's had to feed her poor starving mother or somebody like that by selling her alabaster body to the ravening mob. You try to come up with the stories, the Horatio Alger stories or the fairy tales to fit the American fantasy.

Riess: It's a newspaper tradition.

Newhall: An unwritten tradition. Many editors didn't even realize it. An editor or a reporter in those days would come to work, and the first thing he'd have to learn was to toughen himself up so he could look with a certain amount of cynicism at violence or violent death. They'd go out and cover their first few murders. You'd find they used to make themselves put on this cynical front, do a lot of hard drinking. But newspapermen are at heart Pollyannas, they are suckers, they're credulous, and they're gossips. And that's why they go into the trade. They're looking for these fairy tales. I'm perhaps exaggerating it, but I will demonstrate, I think, the accuracy of these observations in discussing later on perhaps some of the Chronicle promotions.

Riess: So you are saying that the people wish the fairy tales and the newspapermen want to write the fairy tales.

Newhall: Sure they do.

Riess: So I don't have to defend the readers, because the writer is part of this fantasy, too.

Newhall: Oh, it's a symbiotic relationship. They live on each other.

Riess: And it doesn't happen in other countries?

Newhall: I imagine it does. It's probably even more flamboyant there, but I have never published a paper in another country. I think it probably is even worse in other countries. I think the English papers, in terms of their fairy tale content, are even worse. After all, they do have royalty on hand. So you can get a fairy tale going every day.

Riess: Did you and Charlie feel the same way about that? Was that the tone of your interchanges?

Newhall: Well, Charlie was a very fine gentleman. I liked him personally, and as I said, we were of an age and more or less an education. But he left pretty much the whole product to me. He gave me the responsibility--the privilege, but also the responsibility for it. And he tried to provide the money to keep the doors open.

Riess: You were describing going to see him and he had written out what the assets were.

Newhall: Yes. He said, "All right, this is all we've got to go on." So I think we worked out when could we afford to put some advertisements in the trade papers or in our own papers saying, "Read the Chronicle."

Riess: That was one of the first things you did?

Newhall: We had to, yes. You get into promotions. I mentioned earlier, to put out a successful paper, I think, any proper paper--I don't like to use words "good" or "bad," but I think what I consider to be an admirable, proper paper--you have to publish the product, but then you have to promote it by sending a message to your potential readers that this is, indeed, a wonderful newspaper. "And if indeed you read this you will find a pot of gold at the end of the Chronicle's rainbow." Or, you will get good news, you will read the best news, you will enjoy it, and people will respect you because you can quote things you have seen in the Chronicle.

The ideal thing from my point of view as a publisher and a promoter, or an editor and a promoter, is to put out a product in terms of the Chronicle that, if people went to a party, say, or went to the pub or the bar to drink and their friends say, "Hey, did you see that story in the Chronicle about so-and-so?" that the person would feel embarrassed to admit that he really had not read it, he had not seen the Chronicle. In that way you do develop customers, if you see what I'm trying to say.

So we had to put out a paper that once people read it, they would continue to read it, we hoped. Then we had to, as I say, get the message circulated. You know, "Hurry, hurry, hurry, the show is about to go on," so people would tune themselves into the San Francisco Chronicle. And we did this by contriving a promotional campaign that would attract attention.

The Ivory Tower Assessments

Newhall: I will say early that our promotional campaigns were so successful that most of my colleagues or contemporaries in journalistic academia were so smitten by the promotions that they never bothered to find out whether or not the Chronicle was in fact a good newspaper.

Riess: Smitten, or stricken!

Newhall: There is still a legend abroad among these poor people that, my god, the Chronicle is garbage. And it's a shame. This fellow [Ben] Bagdikian over at Cal--I've never met the man, but I think he's probably really quite able--he wrote an article in San Francisco Magazine and he had the gall to say, "You know, this is the most terrible garbage that has ever been put out under Newhall's regime,

but unfortunately Newhall was a genius."* Now he used the word "unfortunately." Well, balls!

He's a fine man, I'm sure. And I'm not going to hold forth too much on academics and the world of journalism except to say that a great many journalism schools are staffed with people who have either become bored or infuriated by the newspapers and seek their journalistic rewards elsewhere, or who have failed in the performance of the duties in the actual press. I say "or"--hell, I taught over at Cal for a while, and a lot of my friends did.

Riess: In fact, you were living in Berkeley and you must have taken a certain amount of flak from the University people you knew.

Newhall: I certainly did. As the Chronicle succeeded--now when I say "succeeded" I'm speaking in terms of Mammon--as our circulation grew, this caused a certain amount of shock among a great many of my friends, particularly on the north side of Berkeley, up on the hill there. I'd go to parties--I knew a lot of people--and I'd get such a ragging, you know, about what was wrong with the Chronicle.

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Newhall: I got so tired of it I eventually just quit making the social rounds on Nut Hill. It just wasn't worth the effort They were all wrong, of course, but that was their privilege.

I met Lewis Mumford at a party at Bill Wurster's when Mumford was out here at Cal for a semester. He said, "What's all this anti-Chronicle stuff? I've been here six months and it's one of the greatest papers I've seen." Someone said, "But there's never any news." He said, "Well, look, I looked at it yesterday, and every story that was on the front pages of the Times was on the front page of the Chronicle." I think it was the only time anybody's ever come up with this. Mumford was great, and he shut them up.

I will jump for one moment, perhaps to simplify some of my attitudes with respect to the product and readership. In 1963 I bought a paper called the Newhall Signal down in the little town of Newhall. It was the kind of southern California Middle West tank town in which Richard Nixon would be regarded as a roaring liberal. I mean, this was really John Birch country, 95 percent. This was also a very competitive situation, and I figured, "All right, I've got to take over this community," in terms of being a communicator. This was during the Vietnam period, and I would say that people down there were 98 percent pro-Vietnam, you know, pro-continuing the war,

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*San Francisco Magazine, May 1982.

and so on and so forth, while people were rioting against it elsewhere.

So the Signal became, editorially, anti-Vietnam and anti-Nixon to a degree which you cannot believe. You know, the KKK held meetings down there and so on. And therefore, naturally, within six months we were hated uniformly by 98 percent of the people and we were read by 100 percent. So reader-baiting is one tactic in attracting a certain amount of attention, although I was always totally sincere in my editorial posture. But those pro-Vietnam people read our anti-Vietnam, anti-Nixon newspaper.

So all these guys we would break bread with in Berkeley--you know, they were all standing around the redwood parlor with the Navajo rugs on the floor and the Indian bead curtains, drinking an adequate little Napa Valley wine and munching on some cheese and listening to Scott Joplin or Dizzy Gillespie--and they were always telling me what a shambles the Chronicle was. And I got tired of it.

Riess: Did you defend yourself in the beginning?

Newhall: Not much. Not much, I really didn't. Why bother? I mean, they were my friends. I didn't care. Quite honestly, I didn't care what anybody thought. That was their problem.

Riess: Was it that old "We'd rather be reading the New York Times" attitude?

Newhall: Oh my god, that started it all.

Riess: Is that basically it?

Newhall: Sure, well, the New York Times came out and printed an edition here around 1960 or so, you know. They talked to some of the professors at Cal and some of the professors at Stanford. I knew them all at the time, and they came to see me. "Do you think we ought to put out a paper here in the Bay Area?" Now this was some years ago, and they ended up by putting out a West Coast edition of the Times. They wired it into Richmond and printed it there because they'd been told that the San Francisco market was just collapsing, that the Chronicle was a disgrace, and if the Times would come it would be supported.

Turner Catledge, an old friend of mine, was the executive editor then. I said, "For god's sake, Turner, don't come out here. I'm telling you that this is not New York, this is not Manhattan. This place is full of a few very loquacious refugees from Harvard or

Princeton or wherever. It's going to be a failure." Well, it was.* It lasted for a couple of years and then they had to pack up, because there is a tendency among charming eggheads never to put their money where their mouth is. They could read the Times but they couldn't sit around and quarrel about it over the dry martinis, you see. The Chronicle was a lot more fun, especially when a Chronicle basher had a belt or two of bourbon under his tweed jacket.

And the Chronicle was a damn good newspaper. I'm saying that --this will sound terrible on tape--but it was a good newspaper because I will promise you that people in the San Francisco Bay Area who read the Chronicle were as well-informed and tuned into international and national news, although it was presented in almost a capsule form, as anybody in the country. Certainly in the Middle West. Oh, my god. You know, everybody talks about the St. Louis Post Dispatch and the Kansas City Star and the Chicago Daily News. Their papers are "garbage" alongside the Chronicle. I think our news coverage is probably better.

Riess: Did you start the capsule news over the masthead?

Newhall: Yes. We started that right off the bat, because I figured--Charlie was in on all this, a great part of this--we would sit around, and one of Charlie's great values was he had a very short span of attention in terms of reading. If Charlie could read the paper, I figured everybody would or could. So we put that there to beckon people to the inside. And I guess they're still doing it, aren't they?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: I never read the news synopsis on top of the front page. Never in my life. Because I read the whole paper. But I figured most people--fifty percent of your customers are non-readers--they're going to read the Macy's ads or the Emporium ads, they're going to read the race results, the box scores from the ball games, they're going to read the New York Stock Exchange, and a few maybe front-page stories. But they're essentially not readers, because reading

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*"Nor did the Bay Area wildly welcome the Western Edition of the New York Times when it came here nearly a decade ago. True, it was not a reasonably exact facsimile of the real New York Times, but support for it was even slimmer than the paper. Subscriptions were scattered, advertising was slender, and the Western Edition died." (Rivers and Rubin, A Region's Press, Institute of Governmental Studies, U.C. Berkeley, 1971, p. 21).

takes a little effort. Fifty percent of the people to start with won't give any effort to an intellectual exercise.

Charles Thieriot and the Look of the Chronicle

Newhall: Charlie had quite an arithmetical or mathematical mind. He used to like to get things down to numbers. We decided okay, how many stories do we want on page one? Now this does occur to a lot of newspapers, all of them. The Chronicle in the past had been running to pretty heavy gray stuff, three or four stories on page one. And I think we said the Chronicle should have seven stories on page one. Then we put the little review of the world news on top of the logotype there.

Then, for the first year or two, aside from the promotions, Charlie would sit down--he was a man for detail, very precise--and we went over the size of the type, the size of the columns, the number of columns, the headline type. It took months! We must have gone through a hundred or fifty different body types on the paper. What typeface is the easiest to read? "Easy to read" was the biggest, most important thing. There was no use putting out a lot of stuff in ruby type, you know, about a tenth of a centimeter or millimeter high, that kind of thing. And unfortunately papers were shrinking all the time in size and in width--because newsprint was becoming more and more expensive--so we had a hell of a problem: how many columns or how wide are the columns going to be? And how does the eye follow a column as the reader goes down it? How much will the person read?

We developed at that time what is one of the great trademarks of the Chronicle, the boldface leads. They're still using it, I guess. The Chronicle then used to start out in seven point minion type. After six months or whatever it was, for the front page we started out with ten-point boldface, down to ten lightface, then to eight point for the rest of the story.

Today's Chronicle is probably set in a somewhat larger typeface. A lot of papers run up to nine-point body type now. I know at our little paper in the south we run ten-point all the way. We've reduced the number of columns, and so has the Chronicle. I see the Chronicle is running six columns. And there were eight columns then.

And this was all just making it easy to read, easy to read, easy to read. Because there's no use putting out a paper if a person can't read it.

Riess: Were these expensive changes?

Newhall: Oh, not that expensive. You have to buy a few type fonts. But you would measure it only in thousands of dollars; it wasn't all that much.

Riess: It sounds like, in a way, Charlie is a great detail man. You could have said, "Okay, Charlie, you take care of that. I don't really care about that."

Newhall: Well, he would always want approval.

Riess: And you thought it was important, too, I take it.

Newhall: Oh, fantastically. I don't even know which of us initiated some of these things. Charlie had a lot of patience and enjoyment in actually going through all this detailed stuff, but everything, really all these years I was there, was basically and essentially a joint decision. Charlie would not go off and make his own decision. He wanted me to say, "Yes, Charles, that's the way to do it." Or I would have to say, "Charles, can we do it this way?" or something like that. But it was joint.

And he initiated some stuff--as a matter of fact, he discovered Count Marco, but I'll get into that later.

Riess: Did he have an office next door to you?

Newhall: Well, let's see, he started out quite a way down the hall, around the corner. Then Uncle George died in a couple of years and Charlie became publisher--I was disappointed at that point, because when he became publisher I thought he was going to name me editor, and as I told you, my name was never in the newspaper, you can go back and look for it, you'll never find it--he became publisher and editor, because the family always had a family member as editor of the paper. Again, these are titles.

Riess: Everyone knew you were the editor.

Newhall: But why?

Riess: I don't know.

Newhall: Neither do I. Really, I guess, because I was more visible, kind of a front man, they had somebody to yell at. If something was sour the public had someone to yell at. It was all my fault, you know, so on and so forth. And Charlie did not like to appear in public. He was really very, very shy. People would think he was indifferent or, what is the word? Patronizing or snobbish.

Riess: Or aloof?

Newhall: Yes. But he was terribly, painfully shy. So was I, but I tried to

hide it.

Riess: I think that's the case of a lot of the most extroverted and aggressive people.

Newhall: You bet it is. There's an overcompensation you can't believe.

Riess: So it sounds like circulation was the main challenge.

Newhall: Well, we had to have the circulation in order to get advertising and we had to get advertising in order to get money to keep the doors open. It's as simple as that.

Editorial Stance and Editorial Page

Riess: But as far as the editorial stance, you were going along with what it had been.

Newhall: Oh no, we started to change that right away. Because again, if you are successful and get the circulation and get the advertising and get the revenue, you have to deliver a memorable product--you can get people to read your paper once, if it's a lousy paper, and you might be able to get them to read it twice, or three times, but they won't keep at it. Therefore you have to deliver.

We wouldn't even start any real serious promotion unless we had something else interesting in the paper--news or features or columns--with which to back up the promotion. So when we would take on a new columnist or a new service or something like that, we would get it going and then we would hit it. There was no use taking the old Chronicle as it was in November of 1952 and starting all this business, the hocus-pocus and the circus, because the people would not read it long enough to become addicted.

Riess: Actually, that's interesting. When I say editorial stance, I really quite literally meant the editor's slot, and you mean the whole content of the paper.

Newhall: Well, the paper is the editorial product. When I use the word "editorial" it means everything that's non-business or circulation. It is the creative written word in the newspaper. And I do not mean it to be the editorial page only. The comic page is part of the editorial content, you see. Do you follow me?

Riess: Yes, I do. Recently I've been tossing out the editorial page before I mean to because it is so regrettably placed right in the classified section.

Newhall: Which is that? The editorial page?

Riess: Yes, the editorial page.

Newhall: No, the reason you throw it away is because the editorials are no damn good. Come on. Sure it is.

Riess: [laughs] Well, and they're in a different place all the time.

Newhall: I know, but if they were good you'd turn to it no matter where it was. But you're totally correct, it's difficult.

Riess: All right. You're saying it's not that important a part of the paper?

Newhall: What?

Riess: That editorial page.

Newhall: It's the most important part. Or it should be.

When I use the word "editorial" when I'm discussing something on a newspaper, I mean everything except circulation, mechanical, advertising. I mean everything that is produced by the editorial staff. And the editorial staff, which is broken down by divisions, includes all the people who produce everything there, except the advertisements.

Riess: Okay, well then I'll go back to my question. Did you want to change the editorial page stance?

Newhall: Yes, oh yes. Oh, totally!

Riess: It was a progressive Republican paper. Did it change?

Newhall: It was blah editorially. Paul had put in some very exciting editorial attitudes--as I mentioned, the lettuce strikers and "let's go to war against Hitler," and this, that and the other--but it was not consistent, and he had some very much older editorial writers. The Chronicle was one of the old-boy Republican establishment editorial newspapers that were common across the country. And it was a disgrace, from my point of view. I have got nothing going for the Republicans, but I assure you I have nothing going for the Democrats either. And I wanted the paper to be vigorous, outspoken, humorous if necessary, and challenge or infuriate or amuse or delight our readers in our editorials.

[looking at day's Chronicle] Where are the editorials? I don't even know where they are now. You say they're behind Herb Caen?]

Riess: They're in that World section, right in front of the classified.

Newhall: We used to have them on the second page of that section with all the features--[continues to look through paper].

Riess: Now see, I just don't think that's a great placement.

Newhall: Well, I couldn't agree more. But they did this, I'm sure, for some mechanical reasons. I would never have allowed the editorial page to be played this way myself, I really wouldn't have. Because this is the most important thing in a newspaper, in my opinion.

Now there are many newspapers published today that don't even run editorials. I'm glad you brought this up, I think the editorial page, the editorials themselves on my newspaper, should be the most important and highly-read part of a newspaper. This is what is going to save newspapers in our present day world of big time television. In our little paper in the south, which I'll talk about later, most of the editorials are played right here on the front page across the top. And the readership is remarkable. The majority of the people probably despise them, but they read them. And in the case of a substantial number of people--it's the only reason they look at the paper. That's my own feeling about it.

But what the hell have we got here? The editorial: "The conviction and ouster of Governor Evan Mechem of Arizona's senate brings a sorry chapter of the state political history to at least a partial close." Good god!

Riess: Not interesting.

Newhall: That's Thursday, April 7, 1988. (I'm just putting a date in.) Some tired recitation of how a scoundrel is a scoundrel. Well now, what the hell news is it if a scoundrel is a scoundrel--particularly in Arizona? The news would be if you found some hero and he turned out to be a scoundrel. If they wrote some stuff like this about Ed Meese, instead of about Mechem. Here's Jack Anderson: "Why Meese should go." Well, why am I going through this? Here's another editorial, "Baby Boomers!"... "The Census Bureau reminds us that the post-war baby boomers are either reaching or are well into their forties, a demographic observation that will do more than cause us to be nostalgic."

Riess: I think that sounds very tired.

Newhall: Well, this is what we had to start with in 1952.

I am delighted again that you brought this up. The editorial page was my particular interest and baby. I had a little problem with Charles early on because his family was basically Republican. I didn't want to be Democratic or progressive or communist or anything else. I just wanted to be independent and speak our own

minds, no matter what.

And we had a pretty good lot of editorials. We went from the quality of the fruit at the Palace Hotel to Joe McCarthy to the bad San Francisco coffee that everybody screamed about to Vietnam to Giants baseball teams. My god, we had to go through tough years.

Covering the Loyalty Oath Controversy

Newhall: The loyalty oath at Cal. That was the best thing Paul ever did. That was when the Chronicle did its best to keep the University from really committing suicide. We fought that out alone, I think. I mean alone in the local newspaper trenches. They wanted the professors to take the loyalty oath at Cal--some of the oldtimers will tell you about it--and we fought tirelessly and won. Not that we were the deciding factor, but we kept hammering at the regents.

Riess: You had a reporter over at the University to cover those regents meetings and alumni committee meetings and all of that?

Newhall: Ruth did. She represented me. Oh yes. Well, we told them what to do, more or less. I'm just shortcutting this.

Riess: You told them what to do?

Newhall: More or less.

Riess: What do you mean?

Newhall: Well, they're children. They are.

Riess: You told them how to--?

Newhall: The Academic Senate. They're the ones who really had to fight this thing, not the regents.

Riess: George Stewart was one of the people that you were talking to.

Newhall: Sure, an old friend of mine. And I wanted to emphasize here that unless a lot of fighters and idealists like George Stewart and Jim Hart and Malcolm Davisson were not out there fighting, we would have had nothing to support

Riess: So how did you advise them?

Newhall: Well, George Stewart knew that he had the Chronicle behind him. So he would talk with Ruth and she would talk with him and say, "Okay, we'll back you up, you want to do this," or something like that. It

was all mutual. There's no use their doing anything unless it's reported, because it would just be forgotten.

Riess: Yes, okay, that's right, that's true. There is no use in taking a stand on something that you care about unless it's known.

Newhall: I think I suggested the last time I was talking about how a newspaper has power only because it can back up with publicity people who will actually do the things. If there is no back-up or no publicity, which is the greatest reward of all, the greatest weapon of all, a lot of things won't happen. I know I sound at the moment very supercilious in a sense and very patronizing. I don't mean to be. I'm just trying to be brief about it.

Riess: Well, you don't have to be that brief.

Newhall: Here's an illustration from down south at the Signal. A person the other day came in to ask for our endorsement. This was on our own paper. I didn't particularly want to endorse her in the election. She's very moderate, a modestly endowed person. And she said, "But you don't appreciate what a following I have." I said, "Well, what do you mean?" She said, "You don't appreciate really my stature in the community." Then she said, "Look at these editorials that were in the newspaper. Look what they say about me!"

Well, to begin with I had personally written every word of the material she showed me. And yet she was oblivious and trying to convince me that the world was sitting at her feet, because of a few casual throw-away editorial remarks I had written myself.

These editorials I had written were--to her--the most important political assets she had, apparently. And all of this was a startling demonstration of the persuasive power of the written newspaper word. As an old and tired newspaperman, I sometime forget how much a paragraph or a column or a mention in a piece of newsprint means to most people.

Therefore when this horrible fight was going on at Cal between the Academic Senate and many of the regents and the governor and all that--I forget the ins and outs of the whole thing--as long as the Chronicle was there backing them up and pushing the story the "good guys" at Cal knew they had support. They knew the public was with them, and they figured [slaps his knee] god, there are champions out there. This is like King Arthur's chivalry, or Camelot, or something like that. In any case we were very helpful, if nothing else, in this loyalty oath fight. And it took a lot of doing. It took the effort.

As I say, Ruth handled it for us on the ground. Phil Griffin was involved in it, George Stewart was deeply involved, maybe Jim Hart. All the old crowd, Malcolm Davisson of the econ department,

you know, the north Berkeley bunch. There are still some friendly giants at large on the Cal campus today.

I promise you, the other papers wouldn't have fought against the loyalty oath. As a matter of fact the other papers were probably in favor of imposing a loyalty oath. The Academic Senate fought a good fight--and I am not questioning their courage, because I am sure they would have battled alone without newspaper support. Our friends at Cal were wonderful in standing up and winning their battle. They had to put an end to it. This was all during the McCarthy period, and geez, it was awful.

But the stupid old Chronicle also fought hard. Of course, after the fight was over, my good old buddies in the Berkeley outback were back at the canape tray, as I say, sipping their Cabernet or whatever it is and figuring out what's right and wrong about the world. And they're saying the Chronicle is a rag. I've gone through that all my life. It doesn't bother me, it's just kind of funny. We're swell when we're on their side, you know, and not calling them names.

Newspaper Promotions

Riess: The New York Sun, which was called the first newspaper designed for the common man, invented a hoax in order to sell papers way back in 1833. So that kind of promotional effort has a long tradition?

Newhall: Oh, newspaper promotions have been going on longer than that. "Hoax" is a horrible word to use, with me anyway.

Fairy tale is better. Or fantasy. When did Stanley go get Livingstone? I don't even remember. That was a newspaper scenario. When was the Spanish-American War? That was a Hearst promotion. You know, literally. He needed to sell papers.

You remember I held forth here rather pompously on the subject of fairy tales and legends and myths. If you will look at all these hoopla journalistic carnivals, they're all old, old Victorian or even 18th century fairy tales, either finding hidden treasure, getting a reward, or adventure in darkest Africa. That's what the people love. The princess marries the page boy.

Riess: Let's go to the promotions. What was your thinking as you cooked them up?

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Newhall: Our problem was by hook or by crook to persuade everybody in town to turn to the Chronicle for their daily dose of journalistic All-Bran.

Now, an editor comes to realize that the American people--may God love and protect them all--are far more fascinated with the "incredible," than they are with the "credible." I always kept this in mind when we were organizing promotions. People have a real appetite for curiosities and miracles.

However, never in my time on the paper did the Chronicle resort to the vulgar business of misinformation. Actually "misinformation" is the property of the politicians and the federal government.

We never did run any story in the Chronicle, that was to my knowledge a "hoax"--and I'm using the word "hoax" now in its dictionary sense. We never did, and I never would have sanctioned the publishing of anything that was either untrue or unethical or false or fake or anything like that. Some of our promotions may have been exaggerated, if you will. A good bit of what we published was amusing or entertaining perhaps, but despite of--and in the middle of--all the so called fun and games of promotion, morally the Chronicle was a very chaste newspaper--and it probably still is.

Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt

Newhall: The first promotion I think we ever came up with was the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt. This was brought to me by a fellow called J.P. Cahn. He had written for This World and he came back to the Chronicle as promotion editor after a leave he spent selling imported cars for British Motors on Van Ness Avenue. And Cahn had heard about a newspaper treasure hunt that had been a great success in some midwest city.

The most important element in promoting the Chronicle was to weave the paper into the historic fabric of San Francisco. We decided to get an exclusive copyright on historic San Francisco. And one of the most outlandish historic figures in San Francisco was a man called Emperor Norton. I cannot remember at the moment what his real name was, but anyway he was Emperor Norton--a character in a beaten-up Mexican General's uniform--who used to go around town with a couple of hungry dogs. I don't know if you know about him or not. Those were the days when San Francisco had a lot of savvy and a lot of style, and everybody used to humor the Emperor. He would issue imperial decrees, and he issued his own bank notes. The restaurants would accept his money and feed him lunch and dinner and so on. He is perhaps the greatest single historic personal legend in San Francisco.

We just thought, okay, the Chronicle and Emperor Norton are going to get together. I guess I more or less adopted a lot of Emperor Norton's techniques. I admired him. He got away with it.

One paper in Indianapolis, I think it was, had once come out with a treasure hunt. They would go in and dig a hole and stick money into the hole, and then they would publish the clues in the paper and people would go out and dig for the treasure. Don't think the American people won't dig if they think there's a pot of gold under the soil. So we started the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt. We got promotions with pictures of Emperor Norton with his top hat on. Also, he called himself Protector of Mexico. And we buried a beautiful big bronze plaque saying Whoever Digs This Up Will Get A Thousand Silver Dollars. The plaque was beautiful, about a foot in diameter, custom made for us by Shreve's jewelry store on Grant Avenue. We buried the medallion and published the clues and my god the streets of San Francisco came alive!

People were roaming through the streets with shovels and picks and going out to dig. And they would dig! We printed daily clues, sort of jingles. Ruth would compose these rhyming clues carefully enough so that hopefully the treasure would stay buried for about four or five or six weeks. People began to buy the paper to read the clues. And while they were reading about Emperor Norton you would throw in a little stuff for them about, if you wish, the loyalty oath in Berkeley, or the atom bomb, or trouble in Singapore.

When I say our readers would dig--we buried it once right down here in the beach at Aquatic Park here in San Francisco one time. Well, they dug up that whole beach. We finally had to pay a lot of money to hire some heavy grading equipment to bring the sand back in and replace the whole beach there. It was horrible.

And the phones began to ring. I remember--again, to describe human beings. A great big black guy with his Cub Scout troop, he had a message, he said, from somewhere up in the heavens, a message that it was buried underneath the basketball court at some high school out in the Sunset district. And we got a call from the school authorities that the Cub Scouts had got through the pavement and they were six feet down in the middle of the basketball court. I mean, normally you couldn't go through that concrete with a steam hammer! It was terrible. But these people want to dig.

Human beings want to dig for treasure. And if you'll look at your news, they're always going down somewhere and pulling treasure up. Hell, they even pulled up the Titanic. Not pulled up the Tiantic, but they went down to the Titanic the other day. Human beings are still fascinated with what is under water or under the earth. I am.

The Emperor Norton was one of our first promotions. And then

The Emperor Norton was one of our first promotions. And then we had--oh lord, Uncle Muff. I had an alcoholic cousin who had a big beard like Ernest Hemingway. So we used an artist's picture of him and billed him as Uncle Muff, and Uncle Muff was going to give prizes to kids who could find the clues in the trees in the city parks somewhere. And they almost defoliated the damn parks. You know, papers have an immense power, and you learn what gets people interested.

Riess: And each time you did this, you could measure the results in circulation.

Newhall: Oh yes, the circulation would go up after each promotion was over. And we would probably retain ten percent of the increase or something like that.

"Great City, Drinks Swill"

Riess: For instance?

Newhall: Well, Ruth and I were back in New York one time. I was a juror for the Pulitzer committee at that point. And we were staying at the St. Regis Hotel. At dinner one evening at the hotel I ordered a cup of coffee and I began drinking the coffee and I turned to Ruth and I said, "My god, this is good coffee! I've never had anything like this in my life."

I said, "Geez, I'm going to tell them to find out what the hell has happened to San Francisco's coffee." Now!

San Francisco--I may have mentioned it before--when I was a child this was a huge shipping port. The ships came in from all over the world. As a small boy going along the waterfront you could smell the coffee roasting. It was a big coffee town. Hills Brothers, MJB, Alta Coffee, Folgers Coffee. Five or six, and they were big companies. And oh, it smelled so good, the coffee roasting. You could smell the spices in the old tramp freighters that were tied up along the waterfront, the copra, and jute, and teakwood logs and all that stuff. Oh, it was marvelous!

I said, "What the hell, here we have San Francisco, the Chronicle's trying to stay alive and promote San Francisco, and Christ, the coffee you drink here is garbage!" So we put a kid called Jerry Root, Jonathan Root, to do an investigative job of reporting what the hell were San Franciscans drinking today. We used to call it coffee and paid a nickel or dime for a cup. Root went up and down Market Street, he went to the hotels, and my god, he found coffee urns with dead rats in them and everything else, or

the coffee was three or four days old. And the stuff they were selling here was totally junk.

So we did a huge front-page expose about "San Francisco Faces A Swill Crisis." "Coffee Swill," something like that. And it was the greatest thing we ever did. It was a hell of a piece of investigative reporting. But--and I am not going to try to persuade you or anybody else--the people read it. It meant something to them, because they all drank coffee. And the coffee here was terrible.

Well, this "Coffee Swill" crisis is always used, to this day, as an example of the irresponsibility of the San Francisco Chronicle in those horrible years when a madman called Newhall was more or less promoting it. And I just laugh, because I imagine every one of them read every word of it. And if they thought about it, they would have agreed.

Riess: Did that campaign make a difference in the coffee?

Newhall: Oh yes, for a while the hotels and diners cleaned up. You know, these Market Street chop houses and restaurants were terrible. They really were terrible. This city had been once really quite great in terms of being a gourmet city. But, I promise you that today, twenty-five years later, the citizens of our great city are once again drinking swill.

Columnists

Terrence O'Flaherty

Newhall: And we began to concentrate on columnists, and to promote them heavily in the paper. Herb Caen had left the Chronicle. He went to the Examiner in '50, and came back eight years later. Del was already in the paper--that is, Stan Delaplane. We decided to place Terry O'Flaherty's TV column on the front page of the second section. You know, this second section was a whole feature section --including editorials at that time.

O'Flaherty--when we featured him, I had a long talk with him. I said, "Terry, we're going to put you out on the section page, not with TV logs. We're doing this because TV is such a big part of our culture today. Do your column assuming that nobody who's reading your column has a TV set. Then do your column on the TV world and you'll be a great success." And I think he was one of the great columnists on the paper. He was a beautiful writer. That was very

successful.*

We tried to develop something in sports--a fresh approach for the non-sports fan. I tried to get somebody to write sports who didn't know anything about it, a good writer though. Then Charles McCabe came along.

It was my theory--I say mine because this was my own style--that a newspaper is built upon the written word. And it's not built, basically, on motion pictures or on television scenes. We were in competition by this time, pretty strongly, with television. Therefore we had to stick to our own medium, which was the written word. Therefore I thought the Chronicle should be the best or the most lively or delightfully written daily newspaper that I could publish.

You want to talk about some of the columnists, is that it? I've gone from promotions to columns, but it's all part of the same package. Everything was promotion, and the best of all Chronicle promotions was the quality of the newspaper and its writing.

Riess: Well, in a PSA Magazine article you are quoted as saying when you took over you saved the newspaper by "giving it back to its creators," these people, these columnists."**

Newhall: Well, we got them, yes. It's true the Chronicle was saved by the people who created it.

Riess: I'm interested in how they came to the Chronicle, and I'm interested in the business end of it, how you syndicated these people, and what the benefits to the paper were of that.

Newhall: Well, basically, they were all our own columnists. We had a few syndicated columns, but few of the syndicated columns will become popular. They normally don't pack the punch that a local guy will that you're paying on your own payroll. For example, you can get a syndicated columnist, a top man, for $25, $30, $40 a week. And you'll pay your good columnists, you know, $1,000 or $2,000 a week, depending. That's quite a difference.

Riess: Yes. Well, then did you sell these people to other papers?

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*The UCLA Office of Oral History is conducting an oral history with Terrence O'Flaherty.

**"Newhall says he saved the paper by giving it back to its creators: 'We decided that we were going to get every writing talent we could, and we put together a remarkable group.'" PSA Magazine, November 1982.

Newhall: Some. But we never made anything out of it. The columnist's syndicate fees were an extra bonus for them.

Count Marco

Riess: Tell me about the outrageous Count Marco.

Newhall: Count Marco. Well, in terms of women's pages (I'm using the first-person singular pronoun a lot and I apologize for it, it's just faster) I figured I was tired of them. Women's pages had all this nonsense and stuff about God knows what, how to cook or how to do this, that, or the other. But the one thing that women are basically interested in--actually the two things--are either gossip or sex. I figured in those old days no respectable American newspaper had the gall to run a column for women telling them how to get a guy into the sack. Now forgive my patois here--my vernacular --but this is a fact.

Charlie wandered in one day with this fellow who had been a hairdresser and who had worked a stint as a producer at KRON-TV. His name was Mark Spinelli.* I thought, "Jesus, Charles, why are you fooling around here in the editorial department?"

He said, "Well, Mark's got an idea. He says some of his ancestors were counts or something." I looked at "the count" and I said, "Well,that's good enough for me. Have you got the family coat of arms?" Well, we talked a little bit about how as a hairdresser he heard what women talked about in the permanent wave booths. I said, "That's what we want. Let's get really down to the nitty-gritty of this and not just carry stories about the bachelor's ball or the spinster's milk fund drive or some damn thing like that." So he said, well, he could do a column, he thought, that would be stimulating.

I said, "Okay. Well now, what was your family coat of arms, Your Excellency?" And Charlie--you know, he liked to get in on things that were precise--he said, "Now look, this man has the makings of a count." And Charlie and the Count began arguing about whether there should be four spikes on the crest of a count's crown, or five? Well, we finally settled on four or five or six. It didn't matter much. You know, the spikes with the ball on top. And I don't know, the Count said there was something, some kind of animal on his coat of arms. I forget what kind of animal it was. So

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*Henry Spinelli, in Warren Hinckle's If You Have a Lemon, Make Lemonade, Putnam Books, 1973, pp. 21, 22.

we came up okay with the column title "Beauty and the Beast." That's a pretty good title. So pretty soon he just became Count Marco.

Then he started to do this column in which he really put women down, in his way--he didn't actually put down women, he just startled everybody. There was more to Marco than just a put-on, in a sense. Because women, you know, are really quite human. They are. They're not made out of sugar and spice and everything nice, you know the way all we little boys were brought up to think.

One of the Count's first columns was how a husband and wife should get in the bathtub together. He said that's really the only way to go. It establishes a whole new relationship. So he did one about a bathtub built for two. And this caused a stink around town. Time magazine picked it up and people suddenly wanted to subscribe to Count Marco's column--other papers--in Omaha and Niagara Falls and such. And he wrote some columns about how a woman should get out of a bathtub without looking like a cow, he said, or something. It was weird. You've heard all these stories.

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Well, the Count became a sensation in town. We hired him a Rolls-Royce and he would go out to night clubs and the hotels. I tried to watch his expense account. And they all called him "Count," "Your Excellency," and they'd give him a front seat. The people were dying for this. They wanted to be part of this myth.

The Count, as far as I was concerned, hit the big time when he covered the Finch trial down south. This was the trial of a doctor who was accused of killing his wife Big deal. He had a girlfriend, and he killed his wife. Well, because he had a pretty good income and so on, the final trial became one of these really top-drawer murder cases, and all the papers from the East covered it.

Hearst sent out Dorothy Kilgallen, their big sob sister. This is the kind of yellow journalism that the American people loved, particularly (if we're going to discuss castes in America, the caste system) the middle middle class and the lower middle class loved this stuff. Here's a doctor, a lot of money, supposedly killed his wife, crime of passion.

I said, "Okay, the Chronicle's going to really top this whole thing. If the American people want a circus instead of a serious criminal trial, all right, the Chronicle will give them all three rings."

So we sent the Count down to cover the murder case, though I sent a reporter named Tom Mathews along to rewrite his stories. We hired him, the Count, the biggest Rolls-Royce we could find in

Hollywood and he showed up at the courtroom, you know, in a tail coat and spats, and so on and so forth.

Well, the rest of the press, including Miss Kilgallen, geez, they were just insulted to have this guy. Some people came out and said, "The Chronicle's making a mockery of this. They think it's a circus." Well, my point is, it was a circus the moment that the other papers sent out Dorothy Kilgallen and the rest of the sob sister crowd to cover it. You know, it was just the same old New York Post journalism.

Well, the Count absolutely stole the show down there, whether anyone liked it or not. Where every other paper was investigating and talking about the testimony--I don't know, I can't even remember if Finch was found guilty or not--but this story made a big splash at the time all the other papers were covering it with typical courtroom cliches--about whether or not there were fingerprints on the butler's collar or lipstick on the doctor's lapel or whatever. But the Count made big headlines when he wrote, "The important question is, 'does she or doesn't she?' Is the doctor's girl friend really a blonde?"

Of course we made mockery out of it, but the whole trial was a mockery. I'm sure that my good friend Ben Bagdikian would have some comments to make, that we would dare make a mockery out of a trial. But I promise you that American metropolitan journalism (and television) is now--and always has been about 50 percent fact and 50 percent mockery. If the word "mockery" is too strong, then use the term "stereotyped." Anyway, the Count managed to create quite a rumpus. In a sense, as far as I was concerned, I was simply holding up a mirror to the American public and to the American press. What the hell, we were just doing this.

Riess: Was he rewritten in general?

Newhall: The Count was edited quite heavily. But the Count was a good guy. He's still in town. He's put on too much weight now, and some critics might say he is past his prime.

I'll tell you a serious story about him: he caught the eye of a lot of these editors of papers in the Middle West and in the eastern seaboard establishment, stuffy newspapers. This was "before sex," before human copulation was the only subject under discussion in the women's department of America as it is today, take my word for it, and I'll hold forth on that tiresome subject later. But the Count was kind of amusing. People were talking about him. So we syndicated him, and I think twenty or thirty papers subscribed. Oh, Beauty and the Beast was so innocuous really. And the Count was a clean guy.

Riess: Well actually, going back to what men and women are talking about at

breakfast, this is a way for women now to start talking about sex with their husbands.

Newhall: And it's all they're talking about, that's the problem. [looking through newspaper] Where's the women's section? I don't even look at it anymore because I'm sure they're going to find out whether coitus interruptus is a good thing or not, you know. Let's just see for the hell of it.

Riess: So that's not really your Chronicle.

Newhall: That sure isn't. You mean, to go into that graphic detail?

Riess: Yes. Well, yes, and I would say in the last twenty years that there has been incredible regularity of pop psychology sort of investigations.

Newhall: Oh yes, it's awful. It's all the same; there's nothing new about it. And let's see what we can find: "The Anonymous Boys of Summer." I don't know what that is. "Illness is Just a Thought Away--Hypochondria." "Here are the Colors that Flatter Your Skin." This is all old stuff. "Half the Rape Victims are Teens." Well, you know what I'm talking about.

Riess: I do.

Newhall: To me it's awful! I'm so tired of these women and men all moaning about their sexual problems. I'm just sick of it.

Riess: Now two columnists, Ruthie Stein and Gerald Nachman, represent the singles scene for men and for women on a regular basis.

Newhall: Oh really? I was in a restaurant last night and I was appalled. (I'm wandering.) Karl and I went out and I said, "Let's go down to this place called the California Cafe." It's where Victoria Station used to be, down at the foot of Broadway. I drove in the parking lot and I said, "My god, this is Yuppiesville." Because here were all these Japanese and German cars all lined up. I went in and there were about five women to every man in there. They were all sitting around, all these girls, you know, or women. I'm sure they're junior executives in all these new buildings downtown and all this stuff, and they're all career women. And there's not a man in town for them. This is a whole different subject.

Riess: That's sad, isn't it?

Newhall: It is, oh it is. I'll talk about that later if you wish. Really, it is. There is a commentary on San Francisco. This town is full of totally frustrated, lonely women, because half the men in town are homosexuals. And this is true, and I can prove it if you want to argue or something.

Riess: Oh, I don't doubt it's true. What would you do about it if you were editor of the paper now?

Newhall: Well, first of all I'd have to figure out, okay kids, what can we do for you? What can we provide to make everyone happier or more interested in some very basic nice things about our planet-our world? Of course, I haven't got it figured out yet. There were four of them at one table. And they were all well-dressed. They're all getting pretty good salaries. I'm sure they're all driving Mazda RXZs-2000Ys or whatever the hell they are, all that stuff. They've got all the attributes of success but perhaps they lack the one real condiment of life, which is happiness. But anyway they're probably sort of happy.

Riess: Oh dear.

Newhall: I'm sorry I got off on that subject. Where were we? Oh, the Count. Okay. So these stuffy midwestern and eastern newspapers, they all subscribed to his column. And there must have been quite a few, maybe twenty newspapers. That was a good beginning.

Well, the Examiner decided they were going to shoot the Chronicle down. So they got the word out that the Count had once been picked up--now I may have this a little wrong, and I don't want to slander anybody--but he had had a little record of some homosexual deal. He was on the rap sheet in some police department somewhere for something naughty, I promise you. I forget what it was. A very minor infraction, whether it was, either pinching a little boy on the ass or something like that--or maybe even a girl. The Examiner put out the word that "the Chronicle had a homosexual for a columnist. The Count was a bad fellow." Thereupon every paper cancelled the Count's column without running a single column.

Now today--on the other hand--if a guy wants to get a column syndicated, he's got to be a homosexual! That's almost the truth of the matter. San Francisco in that day, when the Count was starting out, was just sort of the Grandma Moses of heterosexual sex. The Chronicle was criticized for the Count's "pornography." Time magazine published a story abut the vulgarity of it all. Every paper without exception cancelled his column without even running it. We ran it, of course, and we never had any problem with it at all. And there was nothing wrong with the Count. He's a good guy.

Warren Hinckle

Riess: Was it Warren Hinckle who exposed him? He says he wrote a piece

about Count Marco in the University of San Francisco Foghorn.*

Newhall: I suppose so. I'll take Warren Hinckle's word for it. He was the editor of the Foghorn at USF, or he wrote for them, yes.

Riess: But this guy, Spinelli was an itinerant hairdresser.

Newhall: Aren't we all itinerant hairdressers?

Riess: And then you hire Hinckle.

Newhall: Hinckle was a very good writer. I have no clear recall but I think the reason was to prove to him that he was wrong about the Chronicle. I'm sure he thought I wouldn't hire him. But he used to denounce us.

Riess: So he was just kind of a "bad boy."

Newhall: No, well, San Francisco's full of these guys. He was a good Irish Catholic, and he went to USF. And if you go to Jesuit School you've got problems after a while, because the Jesuits tend to get things complicated when they confuse "faith" with "reason." Sometimes they seem to have trouble struggling with the normal human guilt feelings.

In Hinckle's case, he was a very talented man. I loved the way he wrote, because he wrote very well when he was roaring about the Chronicle. Oh, he excoriated us! But I figured well, if he's our bad boy or if he's our guy, fine. He was such a beautiful writer, and I think that after a while he became a true Chronicle patriot. Warren is a friend of mine. I've always liked him. And if he could write, then I wanted him on the Chronicle. I'm sure what Hinckle said about the Count factually was accurate. But it didn't matter. But he thought it mattered.

Art Hoppe

Riess: How about Art Hoppe? When did he arrive?

Newhall: Well, Art was on the Chronicle as a copy boy. He was a San Francisco boy--Lowell High--who went to Harvard and then started as a copy boy on the Chronicle. He began writing stories for Abe

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*Warren Hinckle, op cit.

Mellinkoff, on the city side, and he did very well. Let's see, we needed a columnist, as I recall, and I think I asked him if he wanted to do a column on sports. I was looking for people who could write, no matter for which department. Writing is the newspaper's major responsibility--after getting a story--writing it well. You see, AP and UPI have pretty well emasculated the written word. Therefore I figure that newspapers have to retranslate news reporting and fact gathering back into acceptable English. I asked Hoppe if he wanted to write sports? No, he didn't want to write sports, but he wanted to do something.

He and Bill German, who is now the executive editor, were pretty good friends. As I recall, they got together and Bill helped him shape his column. Art began doing a column for us and it just started running. As I recall I wanted Hoppe to concentrate on San Francisco city hall politics.

Riess: Was it always political commentary?

Newhall: It was supposed to be, but Art's column just grew and grew and grew. You know, Art Hoppe, has his own inimitable brand--his own unique style. You might say he has patented the art of gentle satire--with a bomb shell tucked inside it. There's a very fine line between satire and burlesque and wryness and cynicism and sardonicism and irony and all that. Art always had--and I see that he still has--a marvelous capacity of stabbing the readers with a rapier and wiggling it around--I mean, a rapier and not a broad sword. But Art has such a mellow touch that he has always managed to anaesthetize the readers before they feel the sting. Now, after 30 years or so he still has a certain sort of a lovable boy quality about him, he really does. He doesn't seem to be vicious even when he's dreadfully vicious.

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Riess: You said somewhere how difficult it was to find good writers.

Newhall: Writers are very rare, I think.

Riess: They're not journalists then?

Newhall: No, no. Well, there have been, there are some great journalistic writers. After all, Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ambrose Bierce, Edgar Allan Poe, there's a long line of them. I think some of the greatest writers of the world have come out of newspapers. But not every newspaperman is a good writer.

When I first went to work on the paper, you had reporters and you had writers. You had a whole bank of old rewrite men, these old guys with the green eyeshades on, you know, with the phone. The leg man would go out and cover a murder and he'd phone it in, and the

rewrite man would write it. Now it tends to be a little more esoteric. People insist on covering their own stories and writing their own stories. And that's not always totally successful.

But out of every hundred people, there might be one good writer, something like that. And by that I mean the reporter who can sit down and take any subject and make you read it. The New Yorker is very expert in that field. I forgot to mention that some of the reading that we did when Paul Smith was there running the Chronicle was The New Yorker. And that had a tremendous impact on any newspaper reporter during my association with the Chronicle--The New Yorker style. Incidentally, some of our guys went back there, Kevin Wallace went back there, I think Bernie Taper did. They were great writers, I think.

Newhall: Keeping Up with the Media, and TV

Riess: That's interesting. In fact, I was going to ask you what you read.

Newhall: By the time I had to be executive editor, there really wasn't too much time left over. And you're pretty tired. I didn't read much; I wouldn't read the paper all that much.

Riess: Did you read the New York Times?

Newhall: No, I never read the New York Times in my life. Oh, I'm exaggerating. I would when I was in New York. And I have been reading the Times now when it pops up. It's a wonderful paper in many ways.

Riess: Did you read your competitor? Did you read the Examiner?

Newhall: No, I never read them. And I still don't, anywhere I am. I don't care what they do. They're going to screw up. I don't mean to be quite as snotty as I sound.

Riess: But you did read The New Yorker, you're saying.

Newhall: Yes, when I had a chance I would read The New Yorker, simply for the pleasure of reading good writing, what I considered to be good writing. And I read George Bernard Shaw, Evelyn Waugh--I think I've mentioned this--and somebody else. I have always tried to keep up on historical material. I've been going through Gibbon's Decline and Fall recently--there's one of the world's great intellects and stylists.

Riess: One of the books I looked for about newspaper editors and publishers said their average age is 47, they're male, they read an average of

seven newspapers a day, they read Time, Life, Newsweek, Reader's Digest, and maybe get around to reading eight books a year.

Newhall: Well, that does not fit my pattern. I probably read twenty books a year, thirty books a year. I never read Time, Life, Newsweek, the New York Times on any regular basis. I don't even read my own pieces and I never read the competition. Now, I'm sorry I can't explain that. I am exposed to words all day, every day.

These days I follow television very closely. By that I mean I always try to catch one or two prime time TV news programs a day, because as an editor of the written media, you have to cover the news. And the news is made up of two things: the first is what is actually happening in the world each day, the second is what the television people show on their picture tubes.

About 85 percent of Americans--I'm rattling these percentages just off of my head, I don't know--but to 85 percent of the American people news is what they see on television. You've got a half-hour or hour's worth of TV news shows a day, and they cover about ten or a dozen events, and after all, there are thousands or millions of events every day. But the magic picture tube manages to condense all these millions of events by condensing a dozen of the total into about twenty seconds or a minute apiece. An editor has to know what his readers are talking and thinking about as they sit around watching the magic tube. That's why I watch television.

Riess: Then your paper is partly a corrective?

Newhall: Well, yes. But mainly I watch the TV news in order to find out what people are interested in--what they're looking at, what kind of brain food they're getting from TV. They're interested in what they've seen or heard to a certain extent, and not only something that is new and novel once in a while. You know, today it's Noriega, and Panama, or Nicaragua or Palestine. Yesterday it was apartheid, it was an oil spill, or China or a burning American flag, or abortion debates. The news comes and goes in faddish cycles.

Riess: Twenty years ago people didn't sit in front of the "Today Show" at breakfast. Then they had only your newspaper.

Newhall: Do they sit there now as early as breakfast. I suppose so.

Riess: I wonder.

Newhall: I've never seen the "Today Show." (You know, of course, that on TV the news is always packaged as the news "show," it's not the news "program.")

Riess: I wonder, if you think that has happened, then would you have a lot of trouble getting them to read the Chronicle?

Newhall: Well, it's a very good question. I have never looked at anything ever before about two in the afternoon. I don't function very smoothly in the morning. My news day begins at about five o'clock and ends at about eleven, in terms of TV. I don't even know what's available in the morning. I know there are some great national folk heroes and gurus and so on whose names everyone knows, these women and men. There's somebody called Geraldo and there's somebody called Vanna White and all this stuff. I don't even know who they are. I say that with some embarrassment.

Lucius Beebe and the Territorial Enterprise

Riess: Tell me about Lucius Beebe.

Newhall: Well, I admired Lucius from afar for many years, because he was one of a kind I first got to know him in the columns of The New Yorker, and also from the columns he used to write in the Herald Tribune.

When I said I never read a paper--a lot of people put things on my desk to read. You know, they'll clip it out or something. But I honestly never had the time to sit down and go through seven papers. If any editor tells you he goes through seven papers a day, the son-of-a-bitch isn't working for his own paper. And that's a fact.

And I know those guys. You know, if you become a member of the ASNE, which is the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and they have a national convention once a year--you can always tell the airheads from the fairly competent people. These muttonheads will come in with a copy of their own newspaper in their pocket, and they'll have it sent to them by carrier pigeon or by airmail or air express every day they're there, so they can go through the newspaper. Well, any newspaper editor who goes back to the convention and bothers to read his own paper is crazy. Now I'm sorry, but whenever I saw a guy doing that, I wouldn't even bother to introduce myself. I would figure he's too tied up with his own paper.

Anyway, I went away from your question.

Riess: Okay, Beebe.

Newhall: Lucius, okay. I admired Lucius. I read a definitive, as far as I was concerned, definitive piece on him years ago in The New Yorker and more somewhat later. He used to come out once in a while to San Francisco, but I'd never met him. Lucius was a great poseur. He had his own style. He was living a role. He had been fired from both Harvard and Yale, and I felt that gave him his credentials. As

a matter of fact, rather better credentials than anyone I knew, because he had more or less been able to withstand the stultifying effect of the establishment.

He had worked for the New York Herald Tribune, had written a lot of articles for Gourmet and that stuff. And The New Yorker did a piece on him. He was squiring in that piece--maybe you read it, though. I would doubt it, it was a long time ago--Mrs. Somebody-or-other, Mrs. Rhinelander Stewart or something like that, to a play or an opening in New York. And he had borrowed for the occasion a diamond chrysanthemum or something from Cartier's or Tiffany's, I forget which. Do you know the story of which I'm speaking?

Riess: No.

Newhall: And as a joke somebody purloined it during the night, and he had a hell of a time getting it back. He finally got it back. But I thought any guy who goes to those lengths--Lucius is a good writer, he's a hell of a good writer, and I like Lucius, I admire him, I would like to have patterned my skills after him. In great part, I couldn't. He took second place to no man. He was smooth or elegant on the outside, he could be tough, but on the inside he frequently turned to jelly.

After he got tired of New York he came out to Nevada. He bought this little paper, the Territorial Enterprise, up in Virginia City. And he wrote editorials. I told you, the editorial page, I think--and I repeat myself--is the greatest and most important section or department or item in any living newspaper. And unfortunately, in 95 out of 100 newspapers it is turned over to people who are either tired or have run their course as city editors, and there is very little truly creative journalism in terms of editorial writing in the country. But Lucius with his Territorial Enterprise--I used to get that paper faithfully every week to read his editorials, because he gave people hell. And he took nothing from anybody.

Ruth and I were having our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary and decided to celebrate it in Reno. So we flew up to Reno, and on the way up--Dolly called and I asked her to get hold of some Mexican mariachi musicians, two or three or four of them with guitars. I said, "Send them on up. We need some music on our anniversary." We brought a mariachi band up there with us. We were enjoying it. I said, "Let's go up to Virginia City and see Lucius." This was about, well, let's see, the twenty-fifth? We were married in '33, so this was in 1958.

So we went up and Lucius and Chuck were there. Chuck Clegg was a very dear friend of his. Lucius was there in all his finery. He and Chuck came down to meet us in a Virginia City saloon. He had gold nuggets, you know, from here to here, hanging around him from

his Adam's apple to his navel. He was a real rebel against, you know, Back-Bay Boston and Beacon Street or whatever. Lucius had on his high-heeled cowboy boots. Chuck had on high-heeled cowboy boots with gold heels. They had beautiful gold, sort of pierced 18 carat gold heels.

He told me a story. He said, "We were crossing the English Channel. It was a party and King Carol of Rumania was on board with his girlfriend, Magda Lupescu. She got seasick and went below, but the King," he said, "stayed up. It was a rough crossing, but he lasted out the night." Lucius said, "The last thing I remembered before I passed out--His Majesty looked over and he said to Chuck, 'Tell me, young man, where can I get some boots like that? You're the only man in the world I've met who when he needs a shoeshine has to send his boots to Tiffany's.'" [laughs] I don't know, that story always stuck with me. I thought, well now, there you get right down to salt-of-the-earth America--sort of in reverse.

So we went up to see Lucius and Chuck. We had the mariachis playing, and I said, "Lucius, you've got to come to work for the paper someday. I've been watching your things. If you ever really need a job or want to run away from Nevada, the way you did New York, come on down."

So I went back. I used to write him a letter every now and then, or see him or something. I picked up this paper one day--the weekly Territorial Enterprise came in and he'd done an editorial about a couple of Baptists or Methodists or some kind of Protestant missionaries, in Yeman or Oman, one of those Arabian countries. And they had fallen out of favor. I think they'd been pushing their Protestant doctrines somewhat too vigorously down there on the desert. So the sultan or whatever the hell he was of Oman or Yemen or something took them down to the marketplace and beheaded them.

There was a great hullabaloo over this for a little bit and Lucius wrote this marvelous, absolutely hell-fire editorial saying, "This is the best thing that ever happened. It will teach those begging priests to keep their noses out of somebody else's churchyard."

So I called him and I said, "Lucius, you've got to come to work. Come on, you've got to!" So then he came to work for us and wrote a column then, every week. I'm sure Lucius--look, you can believe in anything, some people who took him seriously, but Lucius was just a great yarn-spinner. And he wrote these sort of outrageous editorials. They really had a pretty good following, appeared on the editorial page on Monday, as I recall, in the Letters space.

I really liked Lucius. I could go on at great length about him. But anyway, he was playing a role, and he played it very well.

I also, in getting Lucius--at one point we had the Virginia City camel races. I could talk about that some other time perhaps.* Lucius was the starter.

He got into a fight with a Catholic priest up in Virginia City. The Catholic priest wanted the house of ill fame moved because he said it was too close to the church. So Lucius came out with thundering editorials on a crusade not to move the whorehouse, but to move the church. And they had a hell of a fight over that. And I sent Charles McCabe up to cover him, because Charles was the closest thing I had to Lucius on the paper at that time. No--Charles wasn't even writing a column for us then. But he was a good writer, he had been around. And he went up to Virginia City and he did this series on "The Priest and the Prostitutes." It was great.

Charles McCabe, and Keeping the Writers Happy

Newhall: Then I got McCabe to start doing his column for us, and then Lucius came down to work very shortly thereafter. They didn't get on too well, Lucius and Charles McCabe. I think Lucius thought Charles was using his style too much. I remember we had a big annual dinner of some kind celebrating something spurious at Trader Vic's. All the Chronicle columnists were there. We were always trying to keep the columnists happy with a lot of wine and caviar and would sluice them on a regular basis. You know, a little style. McCabe and Lucius were sitting at the bar there at Trader Vic's. I or someone said, "Well, Lucius, there goes Charlie McCabe. How are you getting on?" He said, "Oh, splendidly, splendidly. That is, if you can get along with anyone who has syphilis of the brain." They didn't get on too well, actually.

Riess: Was Lucius' one column a week supporting him?

Newhall: Well, I didn't pay Lucius all that much. Lucius was a man of some serious means.

Riess: But McCabe?

Newhall: Well, yes. McCabe wrote five or six columns a week. Lucius wrote only one. And at that time I think we probably paid Lucius about $350 a week. But he didn't support himself writing for the

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*See p. 199.

Chronicle. Lucius wrote for magazines and his family had some money, quite a lot, I think.

Riess: The others? Count Marco?

Newhall: Well, we paid him enough to live on. I always let them have a pretty good expense account. I would have a little trouble sometimes getting it through Charlie.

Riess: That's interesting. Then did you rotate them in the week?

Newhall: Oh, most of them were daily.

Riess: They were daily?

Newhall: Oh, yes. Well look at Herb. He writes six days a week. [tape interruption]

When we had all these writers and stuff, we had a lot of parties. People would come through town, visiting Russians we had to entertain, Russian journalists, a lot of visiting journalists you would get in, sometimes sort of semi-celebrities. So we always had these quite nice parties. I would get all of the old staff up there at Trader Vic's or down at the Villa Taverna or somewhere. There were some pretty good toots. And everybody I think enjoyed it. They felt as if they sort of belonged somewhere and were contributing, because they were the people who were making the Chronicle. And our circulation was climbing all the time.

Riess: This distinction between columnists and reporters, was everyone included in the party? Or were the columnists the elite.

Newhall: Oh, we always included a lot of columnists, editors, and some reporters. There was actually quite a variety at the Chronicle soirees.

George Draper Reports From Africa

Newhall: Some of our reporters could write like angels. Or do angels ever get around to writing. George Draper and Art Hoppe--Hoppe was doing a column but he also covered stuff in the news. I sent Draper--I tried to cover the world in a strange way. UPI came through with a story one day that the country of Zambia in the emerging continent of Africa had entered the space race. Zambia, it was reported, had in place a program where they had their own astronaut, and they were training him in a large cauldron. They would shoot him up into the air with a giant slingshot. And I said, "Okay, you guys asked for this." I sent Hoppe down to cover

Zambia's entrance into the space race. Some of this stuff was a little sardonic, you know what I mean. Oh, what the hell. And we didn't dream it up. This was not a hoax.

So Hoppe went down there. And Lord, they had the Ministry of Space. I don't know how the story started. It was a legitimate wire story out of Africa. And maybe the guy was a drunk, the UPI correspondent was drunk in a saloon? I'll never know. But the Zambians had the space headquarters and this poor astronaut guy [chuckles], they would shoot him down the hill in a barrel, a big empty oil drum and he would rattle around. He had on a football helmet. It was awful. It was hilarious.

Anyway, everybody was angry at me about that. I think Hoppe has always felt terrible about it, that somehow we were not treating our black associates with the proper respect. But those Zambians asked for it if they put it on!

I sent George Draper, who was a very dear friend of mine and was a marvelous, rollicking kind of 1928 writer--he comes from a very highly-placed New York family, married Nancy Draper who was Nancy Guggenheim, I guess she was the heiress to one of the largest fortunes in America, but they got divorced--I sent him over to Zaire. This was early on. I said, "Look, what's going on in Africa? There are all these strange things. Tell me what it's like there. Forget all this crap that's coming in over the wires." He managed to get up into the rain forest and interviewed somebody that he described as the pygmy king--or prince maybe-- who was complaining about the lions or elephants or something. They weren't eating well enough and the flesh wasn't good. It was a strange sort of a thing. And the prince was not enthusiastic about his country's new independent government.

Really, things were all kind of muddled up there. In fact, in the fifties in Africa, oh Africa was having terrible problems. And I was tired of hearing all these things about how a new world was developing and democracy was rampant, you know. In some equatorial African countries they would be tying guys up to stakes and shooting them. I don't know if you followed what was going on there.

It was wild! Oh god, it was awful. That's one of the greatest periods of history. Dictatorships, local kings, emperors, violence, I never saw anything like it. Like Noriega, Papa Doc. All that same bit. There was terrible, terrible repression in many African countries--and in many cases there still is.

Riess: And what was Draper supposed to be doing?

Newhall: I said, "Look, find out what's going on." He wrote about the poverty and who was in control and how the armies were in control, and so on and so forth. A lot of this had been skipped.

Riess: So it wasn't that he was going in to get the bizarre.

Newhall: Wait a moment, in those years Africa was bizarre. Well, he got some bizarre stuff, but that's just a backdrop. The bizarre was the true reality of the horrible repression that was taking place. And that was tough to come by. Gee, in some of those countries these fellows would get hold of the army, they would build themselves palaces. Well, you saw what Idi Amin did finally in Uganda. And up in Central African Empire this fellow Bokasa--Jean Bedel Bokasa I think it was--set up an Empire based on Napoleon I--I was fascinated with that. But I wouldn't go down there. And I didn't send anyone down to Emperor Bokasa's unfortunate realm.

Later on I sent Draper over to the northeast horn of Africa. We gave him some money and told him to buy a slave. I said, "Look, we've got all this stuff about how UNESCO and United Nations has cured all the world's ills. Will you please go over and buy a slave. Go over there to Zanzibar or Ethiopia, somewhere, Dar-es-Salaam, anywhere, and get yourself a slave. See if you can get a pretty good-looking one, female. And we'll bring her up to the United Nations in Manhattan there, and we'll manumit her. We'll get her some gold-plated chains. You get her up there on the front steps in Manhattan in the United Nations Plaza or Building. We'll strike the chains off her to demonstrate how we're eradicating slavery from the face of the earth.

Anyway, it was kind of weird. He couldn't get a slave. He apparently drank all the travel money up, or slave money up, or something, and never came back with one. He did quite an interesting series of stories on the problems of Somaliland.

Riess: Manumit?

Newhall: That's the way you free a slave. You take a slave and you manumit him. You give them their papers of freedom. Manumission; you give them their freedom.

Newhall's Rejection of Journalism's Cliches

Newhall: I told that story purposely to show you how, in a sense, irresponsible I have been. All of this was pretty raw, some of it, but was sort of an almost bitter rejection of the cliches that were flying around the country. The United Nations-everything was written in such a never-never way.

Riess: What did you expect from your story?

Newhall: Well, who knows. Readership of course, and we did get readership.

It was a kind of rebellion, you know. This world still needs some of that. A little whiff of reality every now and then.

Riess: You weren't rebelling against the ownership of the paper.

Newhall: Oh no, no. I'm talking about rebelling against just the cliches of newspaper publishing.

Riess: Yes. But did you push the limits as far as the ownership of the Chronicle was concerned?

Newhall: Oh no, I think everybody went along with it all right. No. No, the only trouble we ever had locally, internally, was the question of what politicians were we going to endorse, maybe, or something like that. There was always the drive to the right, to the conservative, to the Republican. And it took some doing to get them past that. Because we had to keep control of the town. And we could not maintain the power if we continued to support every jackleg Republican candidate who ran for office. After all San Francisco is a Democratic city. But that's a whole different aspect of this that I have been discussing, totally different.

Riess: And your columnists--did they take on the politics of the town?

Newhall: We were all independent mavericks.

Riess: Hoppe's political thing is national, not local. I can't think of one of our opinion page columnists who was local.

Newhall: Oh, that's correct. I never could find in all these years what I considered to be a top hot-shot local San Francisco columnist, political columnist. I just couldn't.

Riess: So Herb Caen is the closest.

Newhall: Yes. And he is more than political. Some papers have been very successful with political columnists. The job of good political reporting can be very dangerous, in a sense, because a good political columnist always has to walk the tightrope between joining the establishment or reporting on it. In Washington right now so many of these big shot journalists consider themselves part of the establishment, part of the government. Like the attorneys, after all, in a legal case, in a trial, are officers of the court.

And that's something--I don't have all that much respect for a lot of these high-pressure, high-powered Washington correspondents, I really don't. I don't mean on a personal basis, but I think they get very colored. They tend to become part of the whole legend, the political legend in Washington, the Beltway syndrome.

Riess: Were you saving some of these people for the Sunday pages?

Newhall: Oh, some of them were in Sunday. The Sunday paper was made up of all the feature sections in addition to the daily news section. But because it was Sunday and there wasn't all that much news on Saturday, and Monday's a soft paper, the weekend news sections tend to be a little bit soft. You put some features in there.

Riess: As executive editor was the Sunday paper also yours?

Newhall: Oh, yes.

Riess: So everything was your concern.

Newhall: Despite the title, everything including the color of the circulation trucks and the copy in our Chronicle promotion advertising. I did not run the advertising department, I didn't have the time or want to bother. But everything was kind of joint. As I say, Charlie and I would work out together the advertising rates and all this, at least for the first few years. I didn't have much time for it after that.

Riess: Critics like [Allan] Temko, [Thomas] Albright, [Alfred] Frankenstein--were they people you brought in and developed?

Newhall: Well, most of them had been there before. But they all kind of came back on if they'd gone away, and they sort of blossomed in those years. Whether or not I really was responsible, I can't say. But I knew them all personally really quite well, and I liked them all. There was a very nice relationship. They were given such a free hand. I think they would probably all agree that they were basically free to do whatever they could or wanted to do. They were never edited, really, except told to do better or something. I don't know.

Temko was a marvelous writer. He's a very dear friend of mine, and also a dear old friend is the one-eyed pirate, you know, Hinckle. I saw Hinckle just the other night. I try to keep up with them all. Templeton Peck, he was the head of the editorial page, and he did as good a job as anyone could do under the circumstances.

Riess: Templeton Peck?

Newhall: Yes. He was the head of the editorial page.

Riess: How come I've never heard his name before?

Newhall: Well, you know, in the editorial page department, you're sort of a little bit aside from the rest of them in a sense. And you see, Temp never got a by-line in his life. He just wrote editorials. You see, the guys in the floor show were the reporters, you know, who went to Zanzibar or Zambia or wherever.

Riess: When did you write editorials? Certainly you must have.

Newhall: I wrote very few. Once in a while I'd write one, if I felt up to it or had the urge.

Riess: Are you a fast writer?

Newhall: No.

Riess: A labored writer? How does it go?

Newhall: Maybe medium. I do much more writing now than I did then. And it takes me a whole working day, more or less, to write a piece. It's a labor. For me--I'm not much of a writer. I'm sort of eclectic. I copy one person or another or myself. Right now I'm busy rewriting myself, you know, copying myself. That's what happens.

After a while you find yourself using the same phrase and the same words, trying more or less to describe the same situation. The situations haven't changed that much.

VII CHRONICLE-EXAMINER AND THE JOINT OPERATING AGREEMENT

[Interview 5: April 12, 1988]

The Idea, The Meetings##

Newhall: Before we get into any more about the paper, you may recall that the last session we had I made some what I'm sure sounded like and were probably quite arrogant remarks about academic journalism and Ben Bagdikian. And I quoted from an article: I quoted a sentence in which he said something about how bad the Chronicle was and that it was too bad it's been so successful. And then there was the sentence, "Unfortunately, however, Newhall was a genius."* I know it sounded arrogant, and I meant it to be, somewhat, but it occurred to me--and I just want to be accurate--Bagdikian may not have written that. It might have been written by somebody else at about the same time. There were two or three articles that came out--all written by people who are familiar in the Berkeley hills, about how terrible the Chronicle was. These articles were all not particularly laudatory. I think this piece I mentioned was by Bagdikian.

But the point I was making--and I'm sure it wasn't clear--was first of all I was trying to prove that Bagdikian is not a good reporter because I'm not a genius. And secondly, I was a little bit sore because he said "unfortunately" I was a genius. And that's all I wanted to say. I'm really in pretty good spirits about it all, but I didn't want to appear to be taking it all very seriously.

Riess: All right. Maybe you didn't deny the genius last time [laughs].

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*"Scott Newhall...He had no faith in the readers' intelligence and did not take journalism seriously. Unfortunately, he had talent. He was the evil genius of fun and games." Ben Bagdikian, "The Chronicle Chronicles," San Francisco Magazine, May 1982, p. 66.

Newhall: Well, I know. I thought, "My god, she probably thinks that I was only worried about the 'unfortunately.'" Because I'm no more of a genius than he is. You know, we all clock in there somewhere around 51 percent or 49 percent worth of brain power.

Riess: Any other caveats?

Newhall: Not really, I guess.

Riess: You'll have a chance to see it all in print, and you can make any changes that you want then and there.

I think it would be good to start with the merger. It's a major chunk of Chronicle history.

Who initiated it?

Newhall: In the early middle of 1960s the Chronicle had just begun to make some money. We had started out ten years before losing about a million a year. (I'm using money as a measure merely because that's tied in with the promotional success, the circulation, the content of the paper.) The paper was being received more and more widely by readers and paid for. In the early sixties we about broke even. We had a couple of massive promotions and we passed the Examiner in circulation. We were both running around 215,000-220,000 daily by this time. The Examiner, which had been making two or three million dollars a year, began to lose, and the Chronicle began to make a few dollars, but nothing that mattered too much. So at that time this question of merging the two newspapers--I mean, people say "merger" but joining them together--in a joint production company had occurred to a lot of people. It had been done in I think Tucson, Arizona, Salt Lake City, and the Hawaiian Islands. (I believe the Hawaiian Islands are now a state.) Anyway--

Riess: Yes, it is. [laughter]

Newhall: Okay, they are!

Things happen usually because of very personal relationships, and it so happens that young Randy Hearst, Randolph Apperson Hearst, one of the five sons of the old gentleman, is a great friend of Charlie Thieriot, our publisher. They were both members of the Burlingame Club and the P.U. [Pacific Union] and that sort of thing. There's one thing only that all these loyal Hillsborough people do as religiously as, say, the Pope celebrating Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square. They all go duck hunting, starting with the first day of duck season, which is normally in November, late October, in there sometime.

As I recall, Charlie and I had been discussing a joint San Francisco newspaper operation quite a bit, and I believe Randy and

Charles when they went duck shooting up at either Charlie's club or Randy's, which would be up around the Buttes in Marysville--there are a lot of rice fields up there where they go duck shooting--they got together in the same duck blind. And either Charles or Randy began discussing the matter. It was sort of brought up between them. I cannot be accurate on this. I think Randy may have brought it up first, but it really doesn't matter. And they said, "Well, I wonder if this would work out." Because neither paper was making any real money despite the fact the papers were still quite successful and popular, circulating well. So they decided to look into it.

Well, from there it went into a lot of preliminary discussions. Our lawyers were brought into it. We were not meeting together with the Examiner yet. Charlie and I first had to decide what we wanted and the Ex had to decide what they wanted.

Riess: So Charlie brought it back to you.

Newhall: Oh yes, the next day, sure! Oh, we were in constant touch about everything. I keep underlining that. Everything that happened on the paper, I think everything Charlie did, as I say including advertising rates or anything else, anything I did including sometimes a delayed report on sending somebody to Africa or someone to Russia, we discussed it all. It was an absolutely joint effort.

Riess: So your lawyers were the next involved.

Newhall: Yes, because this is a very, very tricky business from the point of view of law. The point of view of the non-competitive agreements, that body of law in Washington called the Fair Trade Practices Act, whatever it is. This is all very sensitive in the Anti-Trust world. Anyway, there's a problem with competition.* We had to be sure that we were clean in terms of Washington, because Charlie was magnificent, in my opinion, in his concern for and care for the corporate aspects of the newspaper. And remember the Chronicle Publishing Company also owned a TV franchise, Channel 4-KRON TV, and a television license is a privilege granted by all those nice people in Washington, D.C.

We didn't want to do anything that was going to cause criticism from the government. So we studied the Salt Lake City deal. (The papers all pass around these different joint agreements that they've made, the different papers have.) And we studied the Tucson agreements. And I think there was one at that time in Honolulu.

As we went into it I felt very strongly, and so did Charles,

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*Senate Anti-Trust and Monopoly Subcommittee

that the Chronicle would have to remain in the morning field or we wouldn't make the deal, because obviously the morning field is the important field in this city. I didn't care about Sunday. So we were all set to trade off Hearst: we would remain the morning, they would go to the afternoon, and they could have Sunday, because I figured Sunday would look like a big banana to them, a big carrot on the end of the stick. Charlie, however, was still set on Sunday. He wasn't about to give it up.

The Cast, The Players

Newhall: So then we met, presumably in secret, in the Clift Hotel. I think it was on the third floor somewhere. It was Charlie and I and Sheldon Cooper, who represented Cooper, White & Cooper, the law firm that handled the Chronicle business. (Sheldon Cooper's wife, for the record, was a deYoung granddaughter. She was Pat Tobin, Connie Tobin's oldest daughter.) Sheldon, Charlie and I, and then sometimes the Chronicle's business manager, Lyle Johnson. And once in while a specialist from the advertising department or from the circulation department. But Charlie and I and Shel.

On the other side were Randy Hearst and Charles Gould, sometimes young George Hearst who was working as publisher of the Los Angeles Examiner then, another failing Hearst newspaper, this time in the Los Angeles area. Then one or another of the old-time Hearst corporate beautiful people, Dick Berlin or G.D. Markinson.

Riess: What does that mean, to be a Hearst "beautiful person?"

Newhall: Berlin I think was chairman of the board of the Hearst Corporation. Markinson was either executive vice president or--oh, these are corporate jobs. But they came out to sit in on this: it was not just the local Hearst guys, see. Randy was at that time publisher. Oh, I think he had gone on to another title. Anyway, he had been publisher of the Call-Bulletin and he became president of the Hearst Foundation, I believe, and he also had some kind of a title that sort of put him in charge of papers out here on the West Coast. But anyway, Randy and Charlie Gould, who was a very nice man, publisher of the Examiner and sort of completely at sea. He had come out from the East Coast.

Charlie Gould was a very friendly kind of person. His paper was in desperate trouble and I don't think he knew what to do about it--because he had some certain beliefs and ideas and ideals. Well, he sent out Christmas cards that always had a kind of a poem, either from the Apocrypha or from the Old Testament or something, I don't know. He believed in things. So you could always sort of play him --I'm wandering a little--play him for a sucker if you had to.

But anyway, we sat down, and oh lord! These meetings up in the Clift Hotel went on for--my memory will be not good on this. It seemed to me like a very, very long time. I think it must have been over a period of six months or a year; it went on for a long time.

Riess: Was this on a detail level?

Newhall: Totally. With Charlie there, it is real detail. What we did, we just sat and talked about principles and ideas and the concept generally. Then the lawyers on each side would sit down and come up with a rough agreement, a draft, trying to outline everything we were trying to accomplish. In other words: Who would set the advertising rates? How would the advertising rates be set?

Now this was crucial to the whole thing because advertising rates and circulation practices are where you get into trouble with these fellows in Washington in the anti-trust business. How do you establish joint advertising rates? In other words, can you have a joint cut rate for advertisers who go in both papers? Well, I guess you can do that in a sense, because you start with a rate for each newspaper. Then you see the old gimmick was, if you're just going to publish in the Chronicle or you're just going to publish in the Examiner, look, why don't you put your ads in both papers and you can have the package deal for 10 or 20 percent less than the two separate rates added up together. And this is where there's trouble. There was a lot of detail work all the time because of this kind of thing.

How are you going to circulate? Whose presses were we going to use? What building were we going to use? It went on. Really, it was interminable. Charlie and I drove around San Francisco looking for sites for buildings or some place to put the joint operation. In the end we ended up right back at Fifth and Mission. The Examiner moved into headquarters right across the alley from us, and we both used the old Chronicle press room and so on. But that took us months. Charlie is a detail man. I've never seen anything like it.

Riess: Was Gould a parallel kind of detail man?

Newhall: Well, no. Charlie Gould was a pleasant troubador--more of a poet. Charlie Thieriot more or less did all the thinking for everybody. You know, there was this love-hate relationship. Personally we were all friends. There were no two enemies. This was not Israel and the Palestinians. Unh-unh. As I say, when you shoot ducks together you're pretty friendly, on the whole.

Riess: So there were not a bunch of old antipathies?

Newhall: No. I was rude. One session I got mad and I was rude to Charlie Gould which I always regretted. He had no real defense, you know.

I usually do not mean to be rude, but I was just sick and tired of the Hearst people making all these, well, you know, "we've got this fine paper here, we're in the saddle and so on." They were just dying, they really were.

Money, Covering Losses

Riess: You said once, I guess a couple of interviews ago, that for a newspaper making money really isn't such an issue.

Newhall: That's correct.

Riess: Because the value of a paper is power and--

Newhall: But there are publishers and there are--well, finish your question.

Riess: Well, you know what I'm getting at. So money wasn't necessarily the reason for the merger.

Newhall: Yes, it was. I will try to explain it, though, in line with what I said earlier. There are publishers and there are publishers. The Hearst Corporation is one of the large corporations in the United States, and it is built on the basis of vast ranching interests: it's built on the Homestake Gold Mine, digging the gold out of the ground. The Hearst people also have a very large group of magazines that are very successful. So the Hearst people make lots of money. But they didn't make it either in Los Angeles or San Francisco with the newspapers. It really didn't matter that they were losing money; if they had been only businessmen they would have gotten rid of these two West Coast papers years ago.

Now the Chronicle was at that time still about the only major thing that the deYoung family owned, except for TV, which had helped keep us alive when we were in such bad shape.* So it meant a lot to Charlie that the Chronicle should be a productive newspaper, not only in the world of the intellect but also in the world of finance. So to answer your question again, about the same way, if the newspapers were not newspapers, if they were not a unique business, and if they did not mean what newspapers mean in terms of the

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*In the seven years between 1958 and 1965 the Chronicle had lost more than $3 million, while profits from KRON and other properties had totalled $15 million. After the Joint Operating Agreement, in 1968 the parent company earned $4.7 million on $45 million revenues, and the Chronicle was making money. San Francisco Magazine, Dec. 1987, p. 96.

community and social prestige and stature and all that, the Hearsts would have long since disposed of their newspapers out here.

But because newspapers do mean so much in terms of status and political power, the Hearsts were willing to take tremendous losses. On the West Coast the Hearsts were losing by this time two, three, four million dollars a year, or more I assume. I think the Los Angeles paper is even in worse shape now, twenty years later. It was twenty years ago we made the deal, '68.

Riess: Did the paper come out of this actually making a profit?

Newhall: Yes, a lot of money for a while, I think. But I left very shortly thereafter so I'm honestly not privy to the figures. The Chronicle, before we went into the merger, was probably making a million a year, or maybe a little more. And I would assume--and this is an assumption--that probably two or three years after the merger, for a period of maybe ten years, they probably made six, seven, ten million dollars a year or more. I really don't know. They might have made a good deal.

Today--now this is 1988, and we were talking about 1968--the printing company has grown, as things do in corporations. And the printing company, I have been told, now has more chiefs than there are Indians. They are being paid large salaries. These are the printing company people now. You know, they have a general manager and an assistant, and circulation divisions and advertising divisions. They drive cars, probably provided for them. They probably have parking privileges in the garage. I'm sure they have expense accounts.

All during my tenure at the Chronicle we were leading relatively spartan lives. I will say that when I did resign from the Chronicle--on the most amicable basis possible--the only severance I got at that time was a bill for parking my car in their garage that I hadn't paid up for the last six months. I don't particularly like what now have become golden parachutes for the corporation executives and all that business. I've seen too much of that corporate largesse since.

Riess: In fact, one of the results of the joint operating agreement was that 800 people were let go according to something I read.

Newhall: I can't answer that. I really don't know.

Riess: It seemed like a tremendous number of people.

Newhall: Nobody was let go from anywhere on the Chronicle editorial. The cutbacks would have been in the advertising or production departments--which were the responsibility of the printing company. Certainly nobody on our staff was let go. You know, people thought

that, gee, once they got together they were going to fire the staff and do this, that and the other. I'm talking about the editorial staff now. No one on the Chronicle editorial staff lost his or her job. In fact we soon hired some people.

Riess: I will find out where I read that.*

Newhall: Well, I can neither deny it nor confirm it. I honestly don't know.

Cutting up the Territory

Newhall: From the day the joint operating agreement was signed I never once walked through the door of the Chronicle into the printing company domain. I didn't want any part of it, I didn't like the Examiner next door, psychically, spiritually. I really didn't like it. The Examiner moved in on the second floor of the Chronicle building after the merger. The Chronicle staff was on the third floor. I'm talking about editorial now; this was all editorial. Then the Examiner built a building next door and we could go through to their building. I know I did put up a memo that any Chronicle employee found on the second floor would be subject for automatic dismissal. I didn't want any part of the Examiner.

Riess: Why?

Newhall: Well, because we had our own paper to put out.

Riess: But why--

Newhall: Everybody was saying, "Oh, this is going to be the end of journalism!" I was determined it would make no difference. I knew also it was going to be competitive journalism. Look, we took care of Hearst, put him out of business, and they're still out of business. It's tragic what's happened to them spiritually from their point of view.

This is very important, I think. Forget the economics of it, all these people running around the area saying, "Oh, this is terrible, San Francisco now has just one sort of paper and two hats on it," and so on, and, "They're going to milk the town, they're going to make money." As far as I was concerned, I think I have stated very clearly I was in business to put Hearst out of business.

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*"The Chronicle Clan," Part II, San Francisco Magazine, Dec. 1987, p. 95.

One can say, well, I put him on intensive care with a bottle of oxygen next to him. But to me the only truly important aspect of this was the Examiner agreed to go onto the afternoon and left the morning free therefore for the Chronicle. (Sunday is another kind of story. They got together and they put out this bastard newspaper that people call all kinds of names and so on. I didn't like it, I'd just as soon let the Examiner have it. But Charlie is a good man with the figures and he wanted to maintain a piece of the Sunday paper.)

The final thing was, Chronicle in the morning, Examiner in the afternoon, and then both papers participating in a Sunday newspaper in which Hearst put out all the news, all the editorial part, except for an editorial section that the Chronicle had with a feature section, the entertainment section, pink, and This World, and I don't know, maybe a little bit else, I forget what. But anyway, just to keep the franchise, the Chronicle is still part of the Sunday package. The important thing was the Chronicle would be in the morning, the Examiner in the afternoon. And I was convinced that this was the end of the Examiner.

Poor Randy, whom I really like--I do, he's a gentleman--sat there across the table consoling himself, saying, "Well, I think we could probably work this out. Now, if we go to the afternoon, let's see, we ought to have about 275,000, 325,000, maybe 275,000 circulation, and the Chronicle will probably have about 325,000, 350,000." Well, I've always felt bad because I didn't say to Randy, "Look, you're crazy!" But I wasn't going to, because he was just committing suicide that way.

So it started out when the Chronicle went to the morning and the Examiner went to the afternoon. The Chronicle, I think--this is easy to check through the ABC figures--I think the Chronicle probably right away went up to 325,000 or 350,000, in there. And the Examiner probably started out around 265,000, 250,000, 275,000 or something. But from there on the Chronicle went up and the Examiner went down. And it's still going on today. So today the Chronicle is about 600,000 daily in the morning and the Examiner is about 140,000 daily in the afternoon. Now look at that tremendous switch. The Examiner therefore is kind of a skeleton at the feast and the Chronicle is doing beautifully.

Now a lot of the smart people around town are saying, "Gee, why doesn't the Chronicle want to break this deal?" I have not mentioned that the basic economic factor of the whole thing is--well to begin with each paper pays its own editorial bills. But the advertising and circulation costs of both papers are split 50-50. Then after all expenses are paid--advertising and circulation expenses--the leftover profit is split half and half. You see in the joint agreement system there is only a single advertising-production-circulation staff for both papers--so these costs are

presumably much lower than with two competing production and operation staffs. So the papers then have lower cost and more profits.

Riess: That seems remarkable.

Newhall: Right. Nevertheless many people are now saying, "Gee, that's not such a good deal for the Chronicle. Look what's happened. Here they've got all the success, the Chronicle basically provides all the advertising money, but the Examiner gets half the profit. The Examiner should be out of business, or at least on its own."

That's not a good way to look at it from some points of view, because the fact of the matter is, the Chronicle is really the dominant newspaper in the area. And if it is intelligently handled from now on, it probably can remain dominant until some smart operator comes into town and buys out the Ex and comes back into the morning field when the agreement ends. Nothing is permanent.

Riess: What would bring a newspaper down? If you were coming into town now would you be tempted to buy the Examiner and give the Chronicle a run for its money?

Newhall: No. I'd buy the Progress.

Riess: The San Francisco Progress. I've never even looked at it.

Newhall: It's the throwaway, just in San Francisco. But anyway, I don't even know if it is even still being put out. I wouldn't bother with the Examiner because there's too much severance involved. I mean, the Examiner is putting up a very brave show, but they're in a lot of trouble. But there's no sense my sitting around here sounding smart or something about the present situation because I am not very well informed on the matter. I do know that the thrust at the moment, the momentum is still with the Chronicle.

Polls

Riess: After the merger why did circulation climb?

Newhall: Well, it climbed because I think I said earlier, the Examiner was dying. The Examiner was dying. So it just continued to die. But it went to the afternoon. San Francisco is a morning town. Demographically--I haven't got into this, which I will--the Chronicle was shooting for a certain readership, whether the customers lived in the hills in Marin, Berkeley, or San Mateo. The Examiner had nothing much to offer. Readers, American people, human beings, are very sheep-like. And so circulation success for a given

period of time will feed on itself, because if everybody else in the room or in the home is reading the Chronicle, you have to read the Chronicle, so you can talk to them. (I got into this a bit before.)

And that's what happened. People I think became embarrassed, some of them, about reading the Examiner. Now, today the Examiner has to come up against the same fight that the Chronicle had back in the fifties. It's just cyclical, and it's a repetition and so on.

Riess: When you talk about your readership and your demographics, did you actually hire consultants to figure out who your target audience was?

Newhall: Oh no, never. Never. I would never hire any bunch of experts to do anything for us--I never would even take a poll. Now, the Chronicle used to do a lot of polling, and I notice they still do.

Riess: They do polling on your sex life.

Newhall: Well, or on the ball park, you know.

Riess: Oh yes.

Newhall: Okay. We used to poll stuff. But don't ever poll anybody, and I say this advisedly, unless you know how the poll is going to turn out or unless you want to actually--I would never manipulate an honest survey--but I repeat never run a poll (if the outcome is important to you) unless you know how it's going to turn out, because normally people don't know what they think. And I make that statement very advisedly.

It doesn't matter what the people who are answering your poll questions or your survey questions think. Because first of all their answers to begin with are probably fifty percent just vague or random. Most people answer what they think you want to hear or what they think will make them sound good to the person who is asking the question. I think some of the political polls, presidential polls, they may have some of that worked out. But be careful of polls on how you should run your newspaper.

I maintain the public doesn't know anything, basically, or very little. As the P.T. Barnums of the world have suggested, the American public doesn't know what's good for them. Or, as some genius once said--I think it was my old hero Henry Mencken--"Nobody ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people." I've seen too many people fall into the clutches of dictators because they thought that tyranny was what they wanted.

My whole life now, believe me, my whole professional life has been dedicated to protecting the public insofar as I can from domination by a dictatorial group or whatever of whom I did not

approve. Now look, that's all silly what I'm saying, I'm aware of that. But the American people--this sounds so terrible, but I'm saying this because I guess I'd better be frank--they're their own worst enemies.

Look at the last seven years that we've had in this country. We're basically in 1988, and this is six, seven months before the next election. Ronald Reagan's been in for seven-and-a-half years. This country is basically at the point of extinction economically--and for my dough spiritually. I don't know what's going to happen. The press has got the worst damn record for permitting all this to happen. But there's no use my going into it now.

Riess: Good. Well, that's a statement about the power of the press, no question about it.

Newhall: Well, the non-exercise of sensible power.

One sentence to try to wrap this up: I feel that the newspaper, the press, is the only insurance policy a people have in a free society to keep them free. Now you can figure out that. It's our business not to go along with the establishment, but to always be the critic or to examine the establishment to be sure it is not leading us down some path.

Divergent Views, Newhall Resigns##

Riess: Were there changes in the energy that went into the Chronicle after you had made the merger?

Newhall: Well, we went into this joint agreement in about 1968, I believe. I know I left in '71, three years later. I had felt basically there were two problems. (Now I'm getting to sort of why I left. I guess we're way ahead of it.) After the merger the Chronicle from my point of view was secure financially, it was secure in circulation. The Chronicle was a lot better paper than a lot of people think, probably including yourself, I don't know, it doesn't matter. But the Chronicle had one great weakness, the foreign news coverage. And I will go along with any editorial critics of the Chronicle on this score.

I wanted to start a foreign service, because I felt the Chronicle was on the threshold of being a truly great recognized newspaper. We had enjoyed a lot of fun and games to get the paper in this position, but there we were. And I felt after the merger that we would have enough financial energy that we could establish a foreign service and get more foreign correspondents out and take on some of the establishment papers around the country. Hell, we

could have done anything! But it wasn't to be. Charles was not prepared and his family wasn't prepared, I guess, to let him spend a lot of money establishing a foreign service and beefing up some of our national coverage.

This is what young Otis Chandler did in the Los Angeles Times. He put millions and millions of dollars into establishing that newspaper as something to be conjured with. The Los Angeles Times is a hell of a good newspaper. I think personally it's better than the Washington Post or the New York Times, but admittedly I don't see them enough so I can't measure them very realistically.

Riess: Charles Thieriot had pulled off this wonderful merger. Why didn't the family allow him to run with it?

Newhall: I think they said, well gee, now let's see some of the results of all this. I can only surmise this. I never was a member of the board, I never met with the family on a corporate level. I was strictly a working staff member.

Riess: You never shot duck with the boys?

Newhall: No, I never went for duck shooting that much, except when I was a child. It's a child's game. It is. I loved it then.

Riess: Okay, you couldn't see how Charlie was with his family.

Newhall: No, and it wasn't up to me to tell them what to do with their money. I couldn't do it anyway, and besides I was getting, I guess, bored.

Riess: In an interview in 1968 you said that you and Charlie and Gordon Pates could go on and on and on forever, that it was such a super working relationship. And yet you had earlier bought the Signal and pretty soon you were going to be leaving.

Newhall: Well, I think I had fulfilled whatever mission or destiny I had in San Francisco. I think I felt that way. I was terrified that I would find myself in a position where I could not afford to leave the Chronicle. And I think that's one of the reasons I left. Because if I went on, if there was something more to do or if I made more money at the paper, or something, I'd have probably felt that I couldn't leave. And I felt also after observing the Chronicle that entrepreneurial journalism was the only answer for an entrepreneurial journalist, whatever that means. Anyway, I bought this little paper because I knew the area down around Newhall and Saugus was going to develop. I thought, "Well, there's something I can leave to my children." I had nothing in the Chronicle I could leave to my family, you see, in terms of an estate or a heritage.

Riess: That's a nice thought. Time Magazine, February 15, 1971--this is about you and your departure--says, "When the Chronicle and the

Examiner merged in September 1965--".

Newhall: 1965? I've always thought it was '68, I don't know why. My memory is bad for dates, it is. And I would be the first to admit it.

Riess: [resuming quote from Time]--"much of Newhall's competitive drive was diverted into conflict with Publisher-Owner Charles deYoung Thieriot."

Newhall: That's not very fair, really. Except in terms of, perhaps, the vision I had for the paper and what he had. But there was never any conflict. Charlie begged me to stay and I said, "Gee, look, I've done everything I can." There was no problem there, at least as far as I was concerned.

Riess: Conflict is probably a wrong choice of words on their part.

Newhall: A divergence of long-term views, maybe.

Riess: [resumes quote] "[Thieriot was] slowly shifting to the right, more and more Newhall was in a buffer position between his young liberal staff and the conservative publisher...The weary editor...left because he was just plain fed up with ideological disputes with his publisher."

Newhall: I think they've oversimplified it. Certainly there was some of this involved, of course. For twenty years, after all, Charlie and I had sat down and worked together. He came, as they say these days, from a slightly different place than I did, in a sense.

Riess: And as people get a little older they tend to go back to their "place."

Newhall: Well, you must remember, on Charlie's behalf, he had always been the buffer between me and his family. I had been the buffer, to a certain extent, between the staff and Charlie, because Charlie--in the way the American language is now used--Charlie in a sense was not a "people person," if you know what I mean. I don't like those phrases, but anyway--.

Riess: And that seems to have been the role of Uncle George, too, the buffer between Paul Smith and the family.

Newhall: Yes, this goes on and on. See, Smith was a very different cup of tea from me.

Riess: Yes, and I didn't mean to get back to him.

Newhall: You remember Paul saw the Chronicle as his own newspaper. My loyalty was to the Chronicle totally as an employee. Because in my own area with my own family we had our own little sort of

entrepreneurial businesses going, and I knew exactly how the deYoungs felt about their paper, and I respected it.

Riess: Yes. So you think that's an overstatement of Time magazine's?

Newhall: Well, that was all part of it. I think it was oversimplified, however. But I was weary, I was tired, and the staff was--oh, I don't know, I got sick at one point and I couldn't even go to the hospital but what the phone was ringing or they were out there with some kind of beef about the paper. And I was really tired.

Riess: As executive editor, people were bringing advertising questions to you and advertising decisions?

Newhall: Sometimes. Charlie had deputized me to make decisions on almost everything. And if it was a question that I would have to explain to Charlie, I would. But as I keep saying, I can't underline this enough, he was very loyal to me. Why he should let some guy who some people considered a communist or anarchist ruin his paper is beyond me--but now I'm being a little supercilious. He was very loyal. I'm very fond of him and I respect him for what he put into that paper, and he got very little public recognition.

Riess: Maybe that is a little bit of the tone of these questions, but it's not my assumption.

Newhall: Oh, no. No, I'm just trying to go on the record with it because all the stories, even today, about the Chronicle, are about the Thieriots and the deYoungs and how they're penny-pinching, and this and that, and the staff which is the guts of the paper, you know, is getting a bad shot at it. It's not quite right, it's not quite fair.

Entrepreneurial Publishers

Riess: A publisher is cast into this role. The editor is the bright, smart, upcoming thing, and the publisher is the stodginess thing against which you work. It's just matters of degree.

Newhall: Generally speaking, the typical newspaperman, or woman, is essentially a gossip, a very sentimental person, and they're going to look usually for very simple explanations or answers to problems. Therefore they do tend to think in terms like "the working press versus the owners or the intellectuals versus the bankers." You can't escape it.

Riess: You considered somewhere along there buying the Sacramento Union. Did you and Charlie consider that together?

Newhall: Yes, oh sure.

Riess: Was that before the merger came up?

Newhall: Well, let me think. It was all about that time, I think. Things were better for the Chronicle, and the TV station was doing very well. The Sacramento Union came up--and I'm sure Charlie, too, he was very interested in this. What happened of course was that some suede shoe agent, some newspaper broker, came through and said, "Hey, the Union's for sale, they've got nothing but problems, the Bee's putting them out of business," this, that and the other. "You can have it for"--I forget, it wasn't much money, $700,000 or $1,700,000 or $2,700,000, something. It wasn't much, except that, as I keep saying [chuckles], this paper was losing a bundle! Why would anybody pay a dime for it? But we were interested because Sacramento was the state capital, and it was then becoming a significant place, and that's a good platform, a good springboard from which to push off your journalistic ideas.

The McClatchys now with the Bee I think have done a good job and they're a very important outfit now. They really are. I don't know if you saw the story about C.K. McClatchy, the present publisher, giving the papers hell the other day. He sort of got off a little half-cocked, but nevertheless he had a lot to say. Did you see by any chance the piece?

Riess: No. What was it?

Newhall: If I can dig one up I'll send it to you. He just said, look, these papers--this was about how the United States of America is now full of entrepreneurial publishers who know nothing much about the business but who are going around and buying all these little papers. It's the latest fad in corporate journalism.

Riess: You mean, more than Rupert Murdock.

Newhall: Oh god look, the New York Times owns Santa Rosa, I think. And the Chicago Tribune bought the News down in Los Angeles. Our paper, the Signal, I sold to a guy in Savannah who's got twenty or thirty little weekly papers. [Charles H. Morris, Morris Newspaper Corp.] I'm sorry as hell I did it, but at the time it seemed all right.

Riess: So what does McClatchy think is happening?

Newhall: Oh, he just says these guys are buying the papers and they don't know anything about newspapers, and they're just buying them and they use them as milk cows. I don't know if he gets into that, but it's the latest thing. These guys--some of them have had some newspaper experience, but they don't even call their newspapers "newspapers." They are either "profit centers," they call them, or "franchises." And there's no longer any independent journalism. So

your publishers today--see, in a sense they are simply wheeler-dealers. A hotshot chain owner will come along, buy four or five or ten papers, and he'll appoint publishers for each of them, and most of these publishers will actually be glorified circulation managers or advertising salesmen whom he just put there to make money. And then the chain store newspaper owner starts telephoning his distant publishers and tells them, "Send me the money, send me the money."

I think we are facing, if not the extinction, the disintegration of the free press in America in great part, except that most of these boomers with their papers don't have any idea at all. And most of them let their editors put out anything as long as it makes money. It's not like the old Hearst deal where he controlled the editorial operation as well as the business side of it. Even Gannett, a big chain operator, gives the local publisher pretty free rein.

Riess: So out of that you've got a chance of good newspapers rising up.

Newhall: Oh possibly. I think--when you say "good newspapers," what does that mean? Sometimes I don't know, and I mean that pretty much. But I've always felt as long as you have lots of independent, or at least, intellectually, spiritually, independent publishers or editors, the whole body of the press gives the public a fair shot at some kind of balanced view of our environment.

Riess: If you were reading more than one paper.

Newhall: Oh yes, yes.

Riess: But people get locked into their papers. The whole body of the country presumably can elect a president but they don't seem to be able to do that.

Newhall: Yes, but of course, still, you do have your press services and then you've got TV. Anybody can turn on four or five or ten TV things. There is not always a totally parallel approach toward the news in any of this stuff. Now papers--you're not going to read five or six papers. But down in our area the people who think or can influence anything will look at three or four. But anyway, that's just a theory.

Editorials Worth Writing

Editorial Staff

Newhall: [musing] If all the papers were edited as most journalism

departments think they should be edited, think of how dull and one-track our American journalism would be. I hadn't thought of that. I'll use that the next time I get in an argument. [laughs]

Riess: One of the little books I was reading said that--this is back to the theme of the editorial, the editor and the publisher--that most editorials are so weak because the editorial writers have to kind of second-guess what the editor thinks, and the editor has to second-guess what the publisher thinks. Last week you were critical of the look of the Chronicle editorial page, but back in the good days there--

Newhall: The old days.

Riess: The good old days.

Newhall: Don't say good, come on, just the old days.

Riess: Back in the old days [chuckles], did you have a staff of editorial writers? Did they have free rein? (And free rein apparently is not a good thing, because that means that they might censor themselves --.)

Newhall: Did you want to talk about the production of editorials in the paper? Might as well.

To me even then the guts of any newspaper was its editorial page. And why, therefore, were the editorials written by older, perhaps more tired colleagues, who were dutifully punching out stuff, trying, as you suggested, to live up to the measure of the publisher, to not rock any boats or anything? Among the first people in 1952 that we let out of the Chronicle were three or four of the poor guys that had been sitting around writing editorials for so many years. It was painful and difficult. They had been writing them for, you know, Warren G. Harding, literally. (Paul Smith, by the way, this was exactly what he wanted to do, but he was hung up with all these old guys, too.) I had to relieve the editor of the editorial page of his duties which was a very, very difficult thing to do. I got him to write a column. He was a very fine man, far more intelligent than I was or ever will be. That was Royce Brier.

Templeton Peck, Al Hyman, basically were the two who stayed on in 1952. And Ralph Craib, a local fellow, was there, part-time later, and Vince Mahoney, who was subsequently killed in a crash in India, wrote editorials. There were three editorial writers, and they were very liberal Republicans or Democrats. One of the great efforts I had was to convince Charlie that what was good for the Chronicle was an editorial policy that was fashioned in our present century, and that we should be tough enough to provide the San Francisco Bay Area with some editorial leadership or some laughs or some entertainment or something.

Most editorial pages in a paper are eminently forgettable--they are like granola. I mean, they're terrible! The world of ideas in which we live, and comments on some of the realities of life, can be the most fascinating things in the world. I'd write editorials for the Signal and I apologize for saying "I" in this case, but I think they were probably easily the most widely read things the paper's ever had.

The Captive Audience

Newhall: So the editorial production in the Chronicle centered around this editorial meeting every morning at 10 o'clock in the office next to mine. I would attend almost religiously. And we would just sit around and gas and talk and make jokes and say, yeah, what is it we want to say? What are we going to do here? and so on. We went through some very difficult times: Vietnam was the toughest. And in discussing things we talked a great deal about the San Francisco local scene, too.

One of our earliest editorial skyrockets in those "olden days" was on the decadence of the cuisine at the Palace Hotel after the Sheraton people had bought it from Mrs. Johnson who was a member of San Francisco's old Sharon family. The Palace Hotel had one of the great menus in San Francisco. I used to eat down there two or three times a week, you know, a nice table. The new Sheraton management began cutting back on the pheasant under glass and that kind of thing and getting more into the bacon burger a la Embarcadero and other culinary garbage. And Al Hyman wrote a piece on the gastronomic disaster of the Palace. Al's effort is one of the most superlative editorials I've ever read. He said that the Sheraton people are now serving all their gourmet dishes with "a little sprig of parsimony." [laughter] It was a beautiful thing.

At these editorial conferences we would talk very frankly, you know. We just enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. I guess I had a chance for a captive audience. I wrote very few editorials. Once in a while I would sit down and write one if I felt strongly and that Charlie might object to, you know--because I didn't want necessarily to put their head on the block. And we tried to make the editorials interesting. We would champion topless bars in San Francisco. You see, Hearst had been building his circulation on this blue-collar, sort of Roman Catholic doctrinaire ideology, what they call "respectability." And San Francisco was becoming a non-respectable city, take my word for it.

I remember one editorial--and this was when our fight was really warming up with the Ex. Charlie Gould was putting big ads in

"respectable or not." But then we editorially at some point told the police to lay off closing up the topless restaurants, bars, simply because it was something to do. I believe in being very permissive, you know, as long as--what is the expression--they "don't do it in the streets and frighten the horses."

So the Examiner came out with a thundering editorial--and the minute they began to mention the Chronicle they were in trouble--about how the Chronicle was indecent. That was it, decency. "A decent newspaper for decent people." Well, you know, with something like this, you've got a guy at your mercy. I wrote one editorial about this. And one sentence--I may not phrase this quite correctly--"The trouble with San Francisco is not that it has too many topless bars, but that it has too many topless newspapers." Jesus Christ, that drove Gould up the wall. One sentence. And then we went on about Vietnam or something, I don't remember.

Vietnam

Newhall: But I did try very hard, and this is personal, to make the editorial page in a sense either outrageous or unpredictable, readable certainly, and underneath all this we had a very serious mission and covered the big things. The Chronicle was I think the first so-called "metropolitan paper" that came out fairly strongly against Vietnam. And this was early. Your friends in the Times and the Washington Post, they were all braying about the communists or the domino theory and all this crap. And I still shake my head at the journalistic establishment that will go along with this kind of stuff. We have it today in Central America, this funny thing about Afghanistan and Israel and all this. These papers, they have no guts. They don't come out and talk about the real world and our genuinely serious problems.

Riess: Well, maybe their columnists are doing it.

Newhall: Oh, listen, yes there are a lot of good columnists. But the papers themselves and their editorials, they're normally flat--once in a while they'll come out with a good one, really they will.

I'm being a little impatient. But back to Vietnam. In those days everybody went along on this Vietnam thing. And I cannot understand why, even as I sit here today talking to you. But they did. The person who finally put an end, believe it or not, to Vietnam in this country were the Hearst newspapers. And of course they were the last people in the world to come out against it.

When the tapes--oh, oh, I goofed, I started to talk here about Watergate, I got Vietnam and Watergate mixed up, I'm sorry. I'll go back, because I'll get into Watergate later. But I think Hearst did come around finally on Vietnam and said, look, this is no go. And the minute they--it wasn't that they have the influence, it was that I think some of the people in the State Department with horror realized how deep and how wide public resentment had become.

You know, the students in the colleges and all that, who did all the objecting and so on, they were very significant. But in the end only an establishment force can really knock off an establishment crime. It's a funny thing. I used to sit there holding my head sometimes and I would see all these kids with the long hair, jumping up and down and protesting and objecting and making a nuisance of themselves. I said, oh my god--we discussed this a little last time--we've got the wrong people on our side. You know, students and intellectuals always frighten most American politicians--.

How are we going to get a handle on this? But that's the way America is and it's a wonderful place.

Anyway.

I wanted us to say something about the editorials. I know I did a couple on this business of blacks and whites, the problem of minorities. It was not all that easy then. And schools, I remember a piece on black kids in schools. I don't know if it was about busing or not. I think they had to bus here for a while, I can't remember. And we used to come out very strongly for integration.

Joseph McCarthy

Riess: How about the fifties? You had McCarthy and HUAC and hosing people down the city hall steps.

Newhall: The McCarthy thing was the most terrible thing, really, that ever came along. What these people and the American people permitted to happen, it was unforgivable!

Riess: And this is an obvious one for the press to take on.

Newhall: Yes, right. And I don't know any of the press who were really going at it hard against McCarthy. We certainly probably wanted to cool it, but not as much as we should, on a personal basis. I know Ruth went over and interviewed J. Robert Oppenheimer and we gave that a big play. We did all kinds of things to try to cool it off a little. I can't remember if we did anything about the Rosenbergs, you know,

those people back in Pennsylvania who were executed on some silly business. [Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed in 1951.]

I know how I felt, but I can't remember all the words at the time. A lot of it would depend on how such influence or prestige I had at the moment. I was not the executive editor then. I do remember when McCarthy died years later, when I was editor, they were starting to think about an editorial on this dismal subject. And I did say, "Now look, McCarthy was a son-of-a-bitch while he was alive and I don't want to see any shit" (excuse these words) "in this paper about how "after all, whether you agreed with him or not, Joe McCarthy was a good American. The hell he was a good American. He was an asshole"--forgive me.

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: We did a piece--I think I might have written it--in which we wrote that "McCarthy is sometimes excused as an 'American symbol,' he stood for his brand of Americanism. But that is nonsense, he is a sorry symbol and he will sink into the ocean and he will never leave a ripple and he will never rise again. It's the end of a bad man." I forget how I worded it. But I don't like this business of forgiving someone just because he happens to have passed on to another state.

Endorsements--Jack Shelley for Mayor

Riess: Is it true that when November came around, election time came around, that the Chronicle started getting quite Republican?

Newhall: Yes, usually--or it used to. It was the easy thing to do. I can be fairly specific about it. The Chronicle had always automatically endorsed Republican candidates. There were supposedly a California axis between the L.A. Times and the Chronicle and supposedly both of us would always endorse the Republicans. Charlie and I discussed this. I said, "Look, we've got to go for some Democrats. It's a Democratic city, and it's a democratic world, or it should be. What can we do?" And I'm trying to think how we finally broke through.

Jack Shelley, a former bakery wagon driver union official--I'd known him slightly, he went back to Congress for a long time, a very nice guy, I liked him. He was a local San Francisco guy, a typical Irishman. You know, he didn't have long hair or anything like that. He was a fine old guy. He came back and ran for mayor. I couldn't get Charlie to endorse him, and he should have because Shelley was going to win anyway. I said, "Look, Charlie, the guy's

going to win. How about it?" But no, no, they didn't want to. So okay.

So Jack came by and I wrote out nine questions for him. I said, "If you can answer 'yes' to all of these questions, you're going to get the best coverage you've ever had in this paper." I said, "We're not going to endorse you, but don't worry about it." And the questions were very simple. I know one of them was, "Will you agree to support the policy of knocking down the Embarcadero freeway?" That was one of them. "If you're elected will you make a house-by-house survey of everything in San Francisco and designate officially those structures that should remain landmarks?" Anyway, those were just things I thought were good for San Francisco, nothing to do with politics at all. He said, "Yes, that's fine."

Anyway, he was elected and he became actually very close to the Chronicle. And editorially at that time the Chronicle was basically right down the line of the conservative Democrat or a very liberal Republican kind of thing. You know, we never went really left-wing. Now some of my closest friends politically were George Moscone, Phil Burton, (not John so much, I didn't know him), Leo McCarthy, and so forth. They're all Democrats. Because there aren't any serious Republican politicians in this town, basically. Poor old Harold Dobbs. He ran for mayor and we worked hard trying to have him beat out somebody, I forget whom. Christopher was our first mayor, he was a good man. Anyway, Shelley won.

Riess: But Charlie wouldn't actually endorse him.

Newhall: Shelley didn't run for a second term or I'm sure we would have endorsed him the second time. We did not endorse Phil Burton, though we were personally very close, and Phil was always obviously going to win. He went to Congress. We had a very good relationship.

Lack of Investigative Political Reporting*

Riess: A way to look at the Chronicle critically in retrospect is that none of the Chronicle political writers has written a book about California history or politics or national politics--such as the Post's Hedrick Smith who has just done Power Game. There were just no great political writers out here.

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*from Tape 11a.

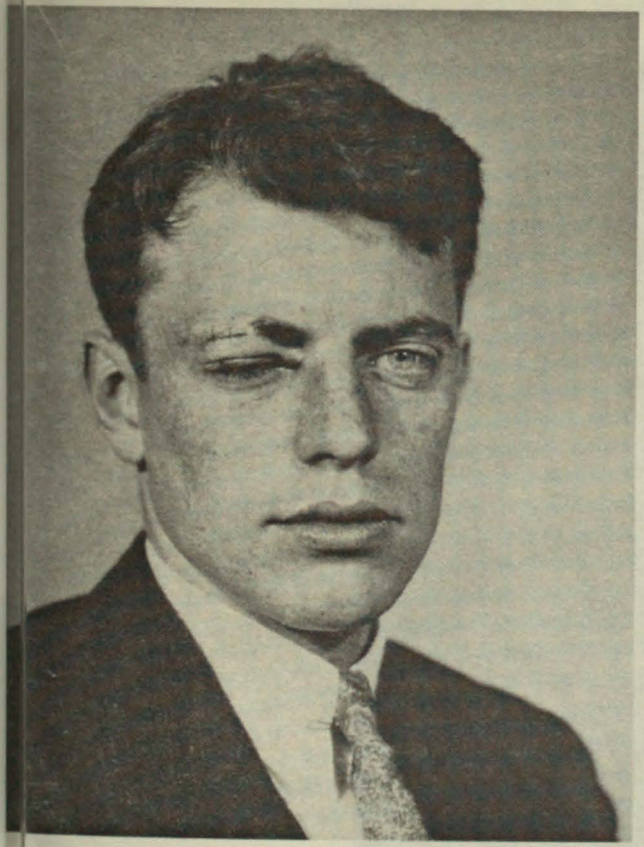
Newhall: That's a very astute observation. I think the most fascinating area on a newspaper, any newspaper--in San Francisco, anyway--would be a city hall beat. And we never really had somebody who related to the city hall the way Herb does the rest of San Francisco. We never had that. I couldn't find it. People are hard to come by. We had to make sports columnists out of general news writers and things like that, and steal off the desk to write columns. I just couldn't find a great local city hall or political writer.

Sacramento had been dominated in the Chronicle's coverage by a very fine old gentleman called Earl Behrens, "Squire" Behrens, who carried the California Republican party on his back the way that Atlas holds up the earth. I have a great admiration for him, I knew him well, but he was an old-line guy. The politicians generally speaking, certainly from northern California, would go to him for advice. He would sit up there in the Senator Hotel in Sacramento and hold court, kind of. He covered for the Chronicle but he was not a so-called sort of hard-hitting, reforming investigative reporter or anything of the sort. He went along and kept everybody in line. No, we did not have that kind of coverage, at the city hall.

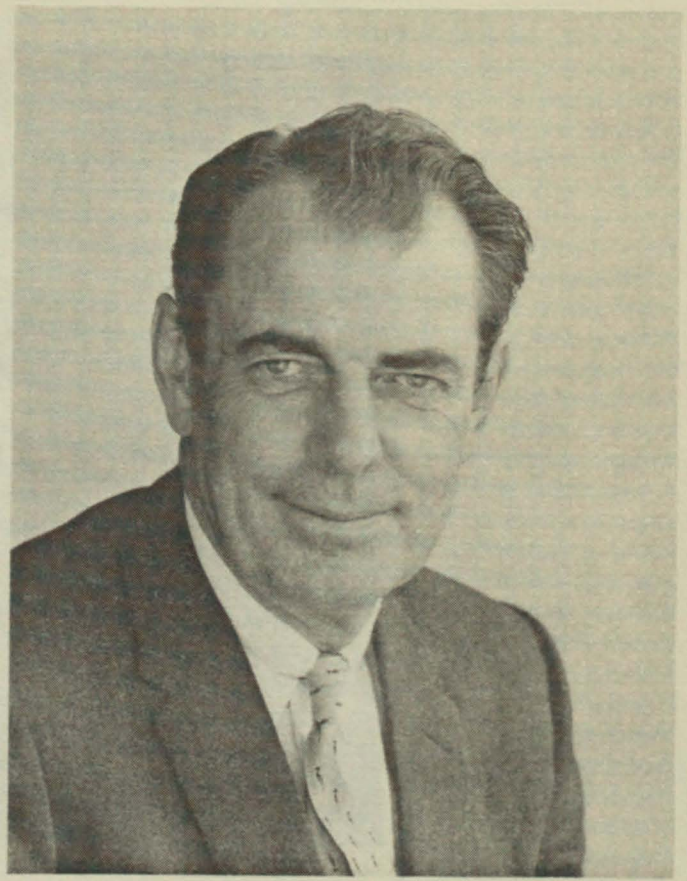
They're doing better now, I think, Larry Leibert's doing a political column and I think we have somebody in Washington now. Years ago Paul Smith had hired a couple of young men to cover Washington. But I'm just sorry to admit I didn't have a chance to do it. As I think I mentioned, when we had the money and the energy to expand and cover the planet with Chronicle talent, it wasn't really in the cards. The world could have been the Chronicle's oyster. I think our horizons were unlimited. But I'd been through a pretty strenuous twenty years and I thought we had come along a good part of the journey, and it was time to wander off into the sunset.

r Scott Newhall and Baby Scott,
buary 1914.

First picture of Scott Newhall to appear in the Chronicle, age three, Marin Golf and Country Club.

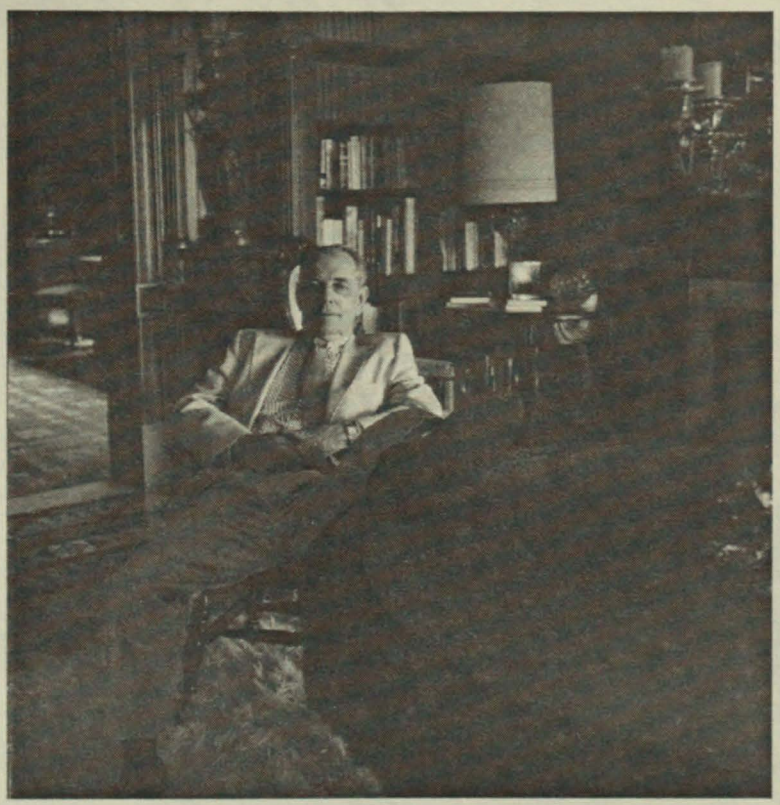


wall, Chronicle photographer, after
ig hit by a disgruntled subject, 1935.



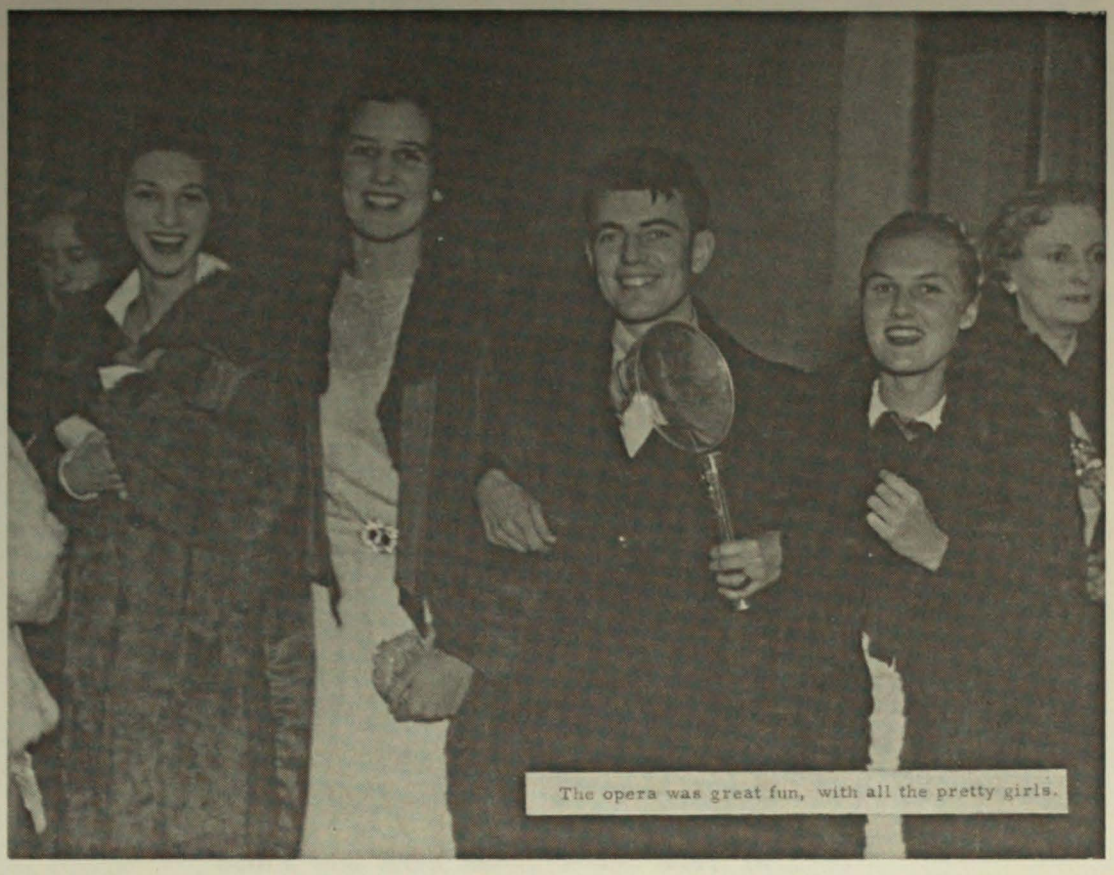
Scott Newhall, 1985.

Scott Newhall, on the right. At the Webb School "smoke shack," 1931.



Scott Newhall at home in The Mansion.

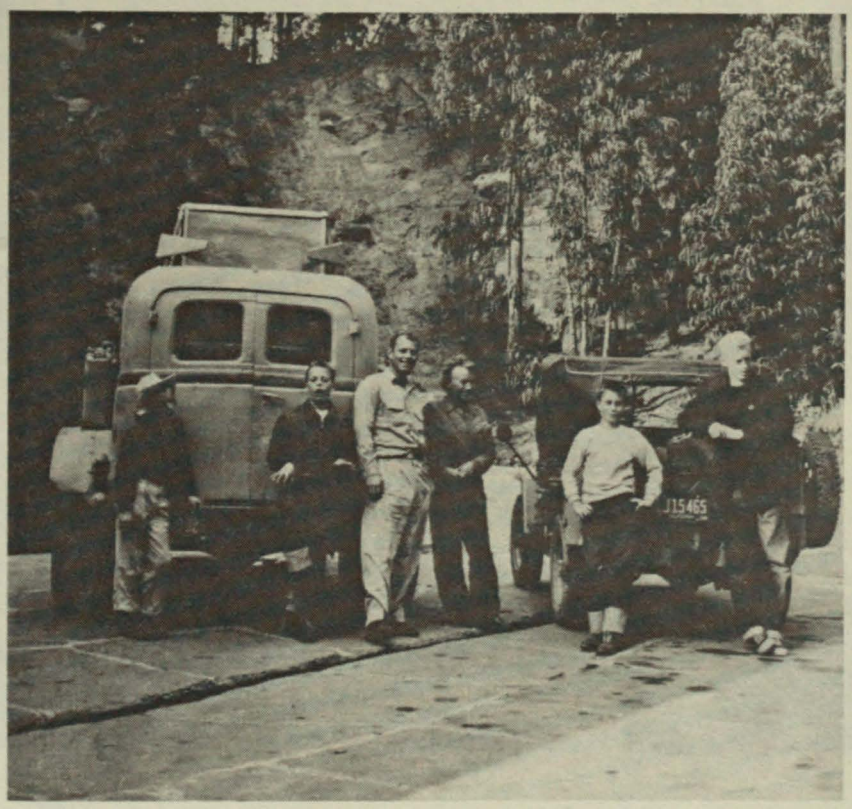
Photograph by Mark Hanauer for California Business, July 1989.



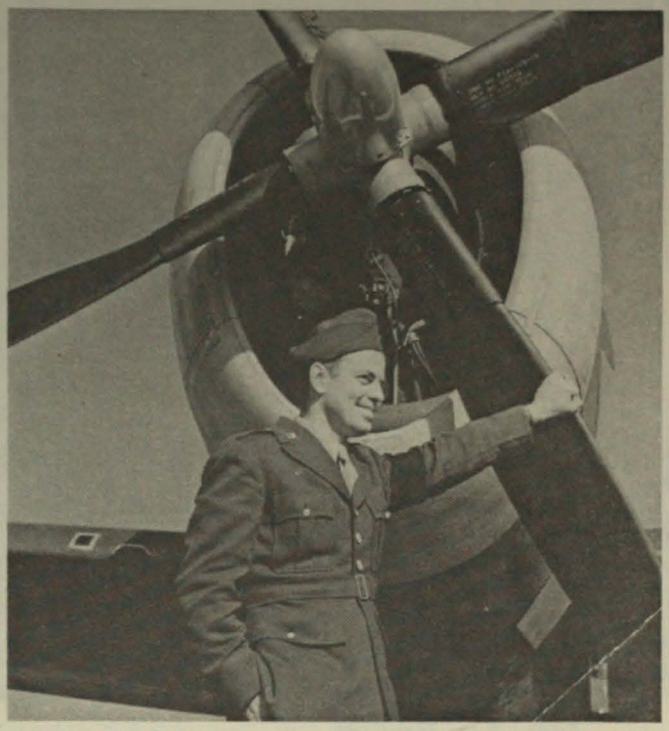
Scott Newhall, at the San Francisco Opera, "with all the pretty girls."

Scott Newhall, fifty-two years later, by the side of the pool in Piru with different pretty girls, 1987.

Scott and Ruth Newhall set sail in 1935
on the Mermaid.



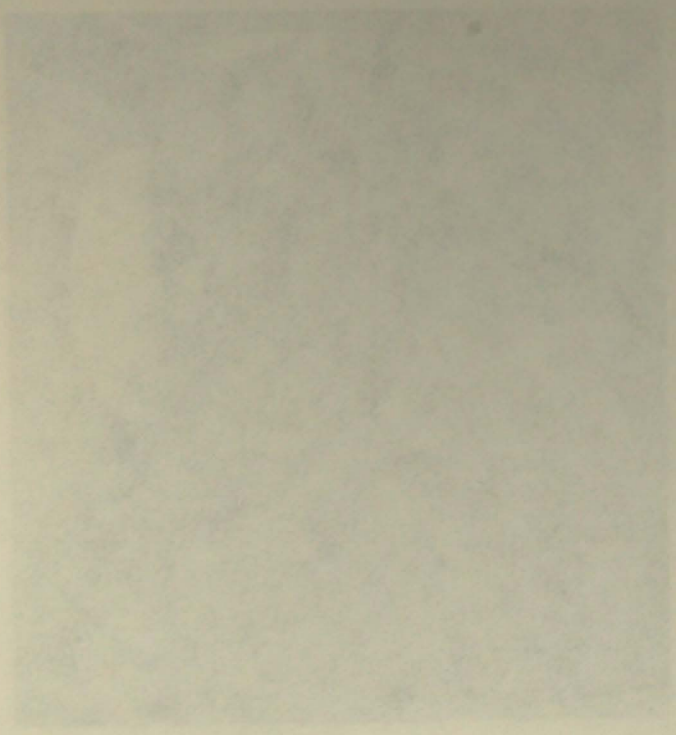
On the road, in August 1954, [captioned] "The King and the Jeep reached the end of the GREAT TREK. The Desert rats had dicovered the exact spot where Padre Escalante crossed the Colorado River in 1776. This was a tremendous question that the entire world had been waiting to be answered. But, strangely enough, no one has as yet asked it." Left to right: Penny, Jon, Scott, Ruth, Tony, Skip.

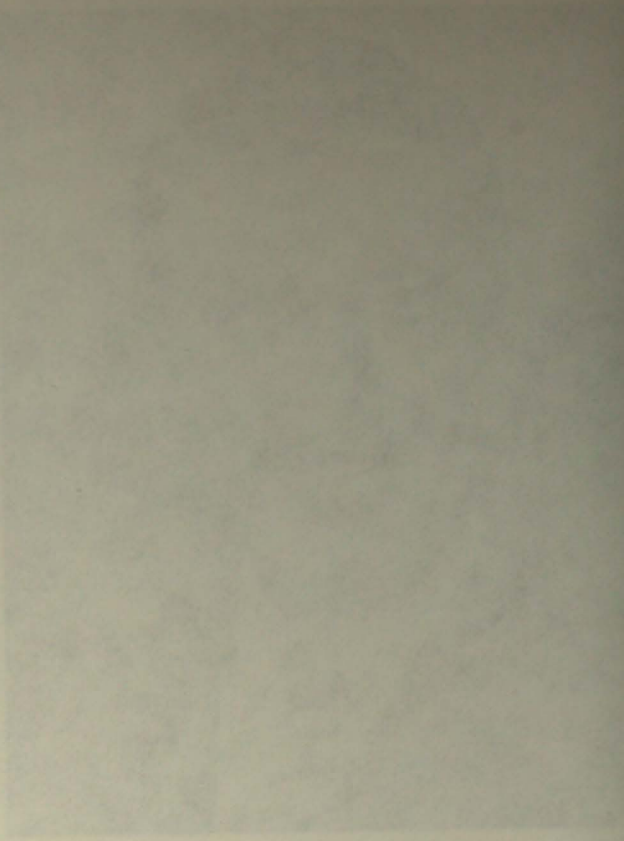


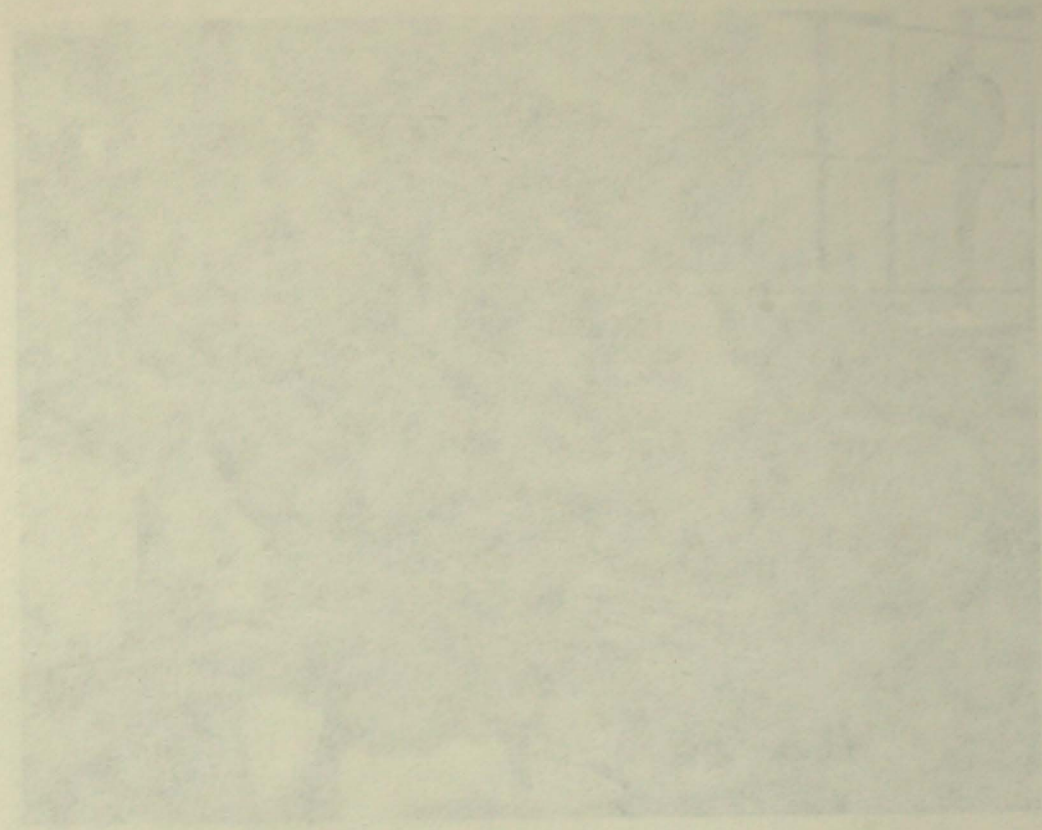
Top Left: Paul Smith, 1946.

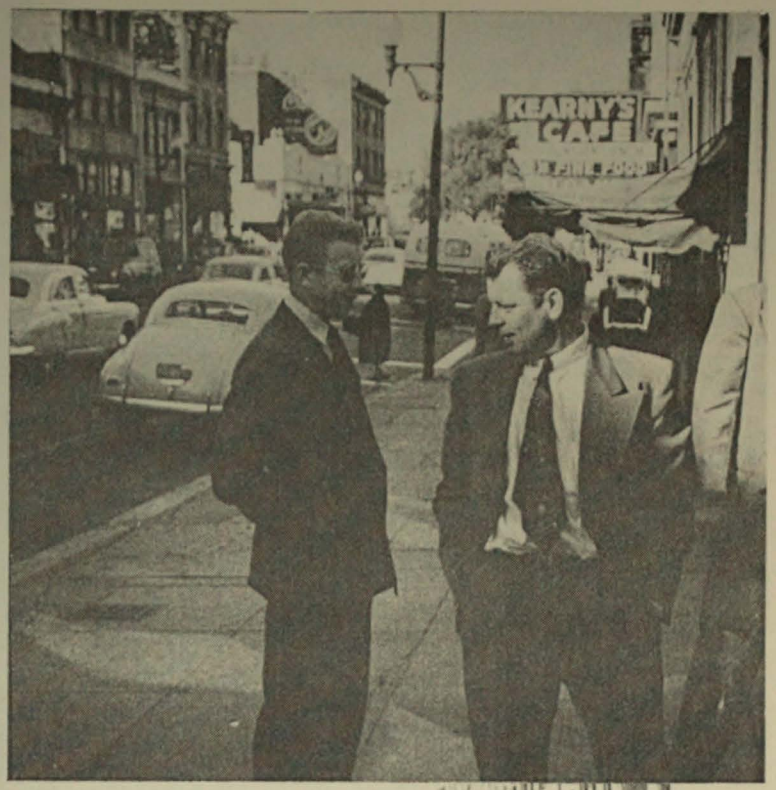
Top Right: Scott Newhall, Correspondent, World War II, 1943.

Botton: This World staff, George Draper, George deCarvalho, Ruth Newhall, and Scott Newhall. August 1944.

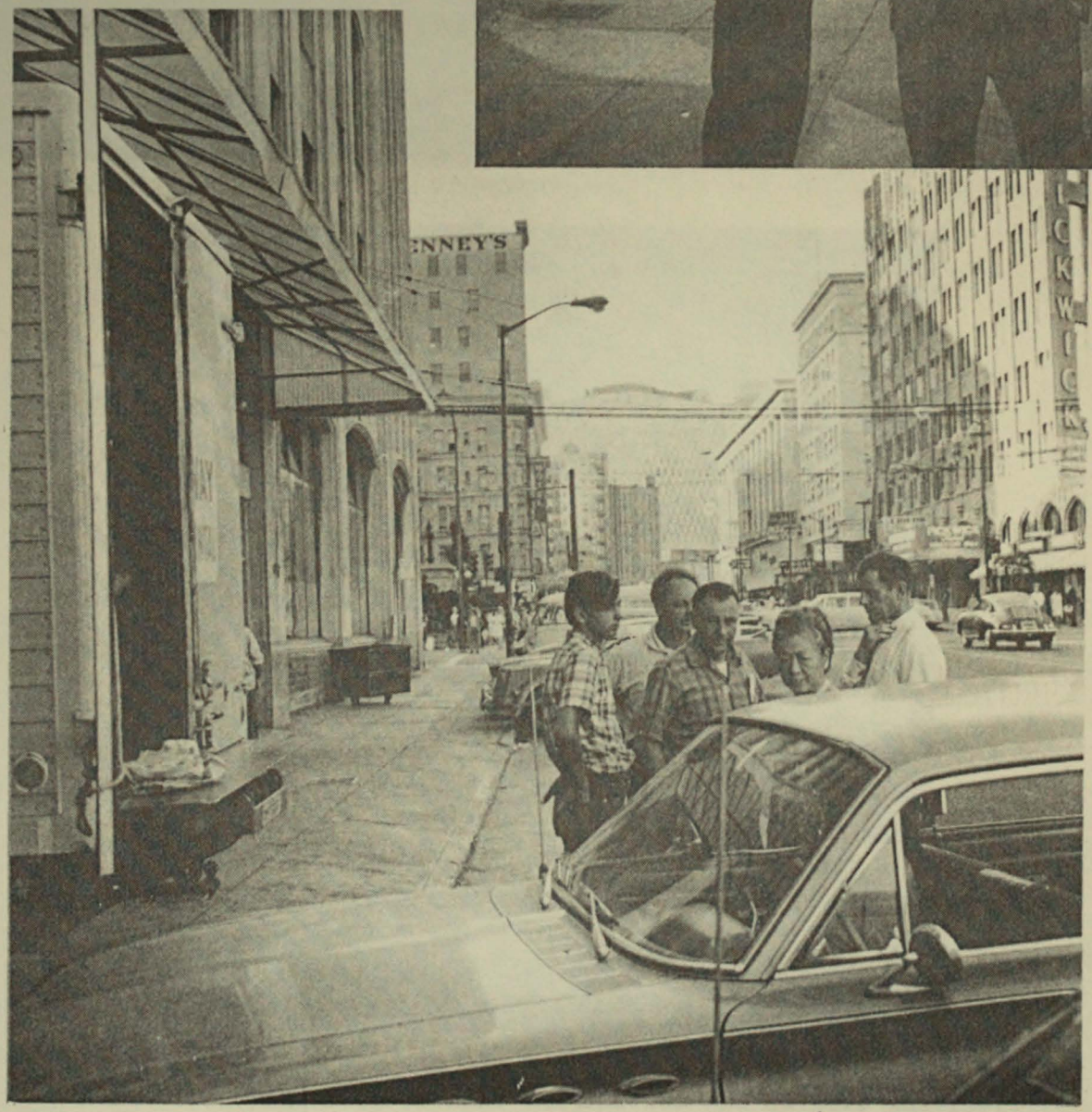








Scott Newhall with Dave Nelson on Kearny Street, San Francisco, 1950.



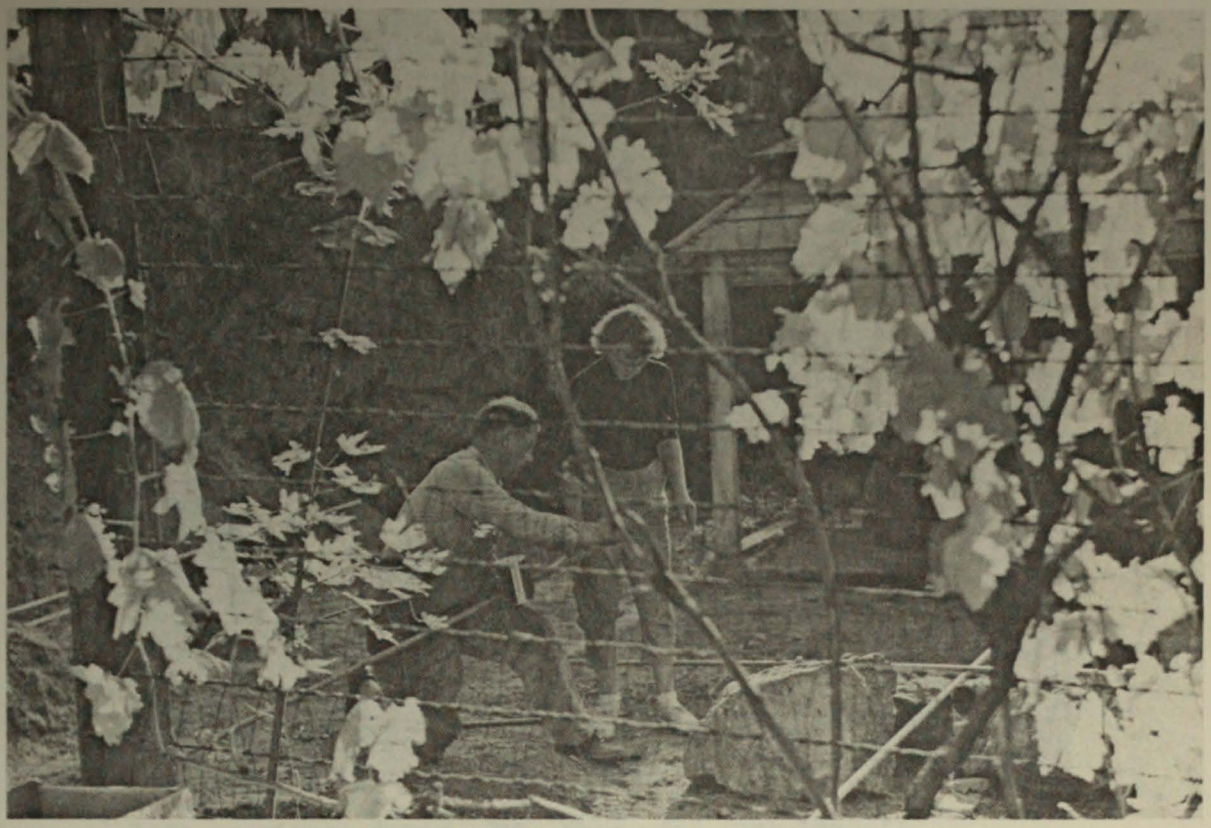
Billy and Bill Bartz, Harry Dring, Dolly Rhee, and Scott Newhall at "the chutes" (loading point for Chronicle trucks on Fifth Street, alongside Chronicle building).

Photographs by Karl Kortum

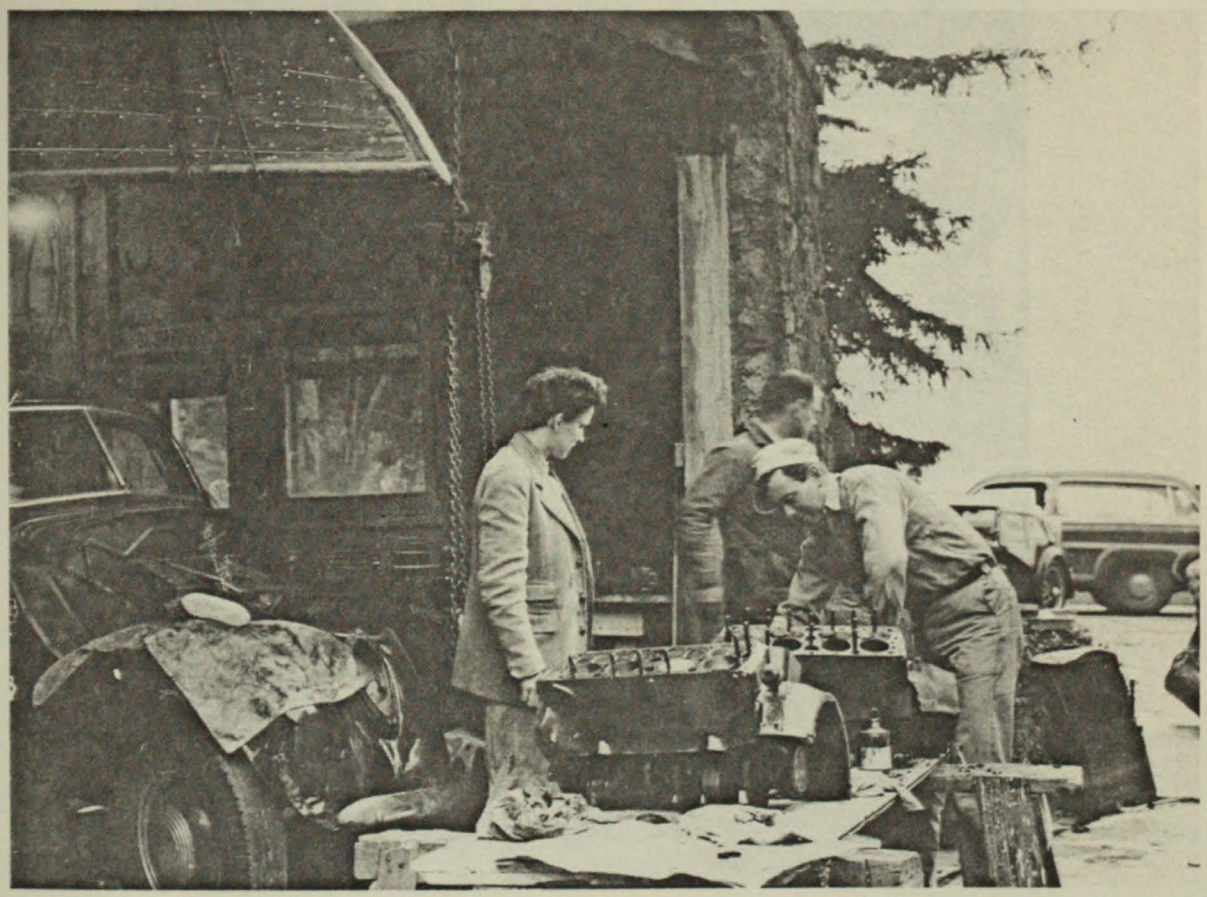
Top Left: Scott and Ruth Newhall and Charles and Barbara Thieriot, 1958.

Top Right: Ruth and Scott Newhall at debutante cotillion, 1955.

Bottom: Jonathan Daniels, left, Scott Newhall, and Lee Hills, Pulitizer judging, New York, 1959.

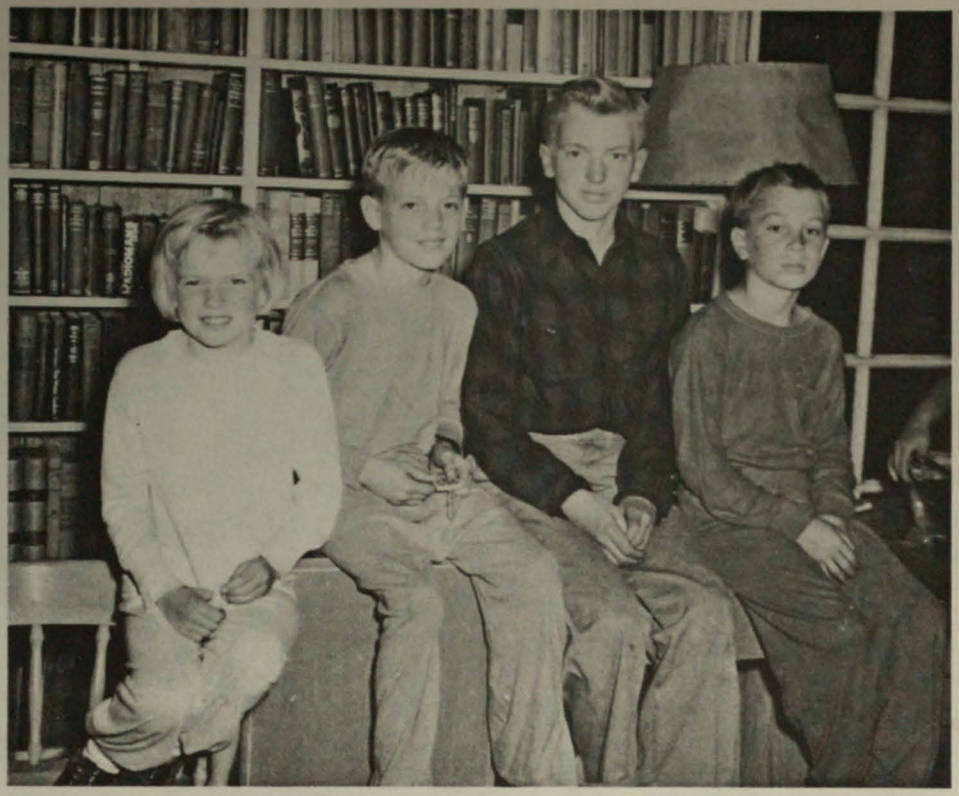


"Scott and Ruth created a home, garden, and shops in an abandoned rock quarry at the top of the Berkeley hills." [Karl Kortum]



"A busy Saturday at the Newhall shops, #1 Hill Road, Berkeley. Denise McCluggage, Kenny Glasgow, Scott." [Karl Kortum]

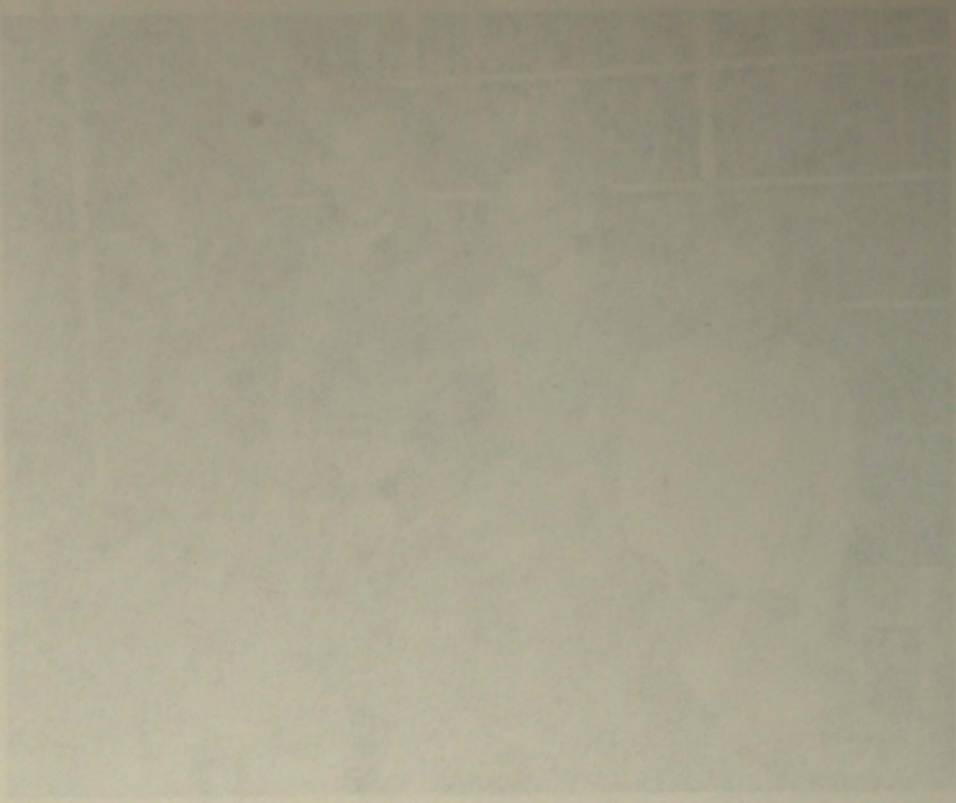
Photographs by Karl Kortum

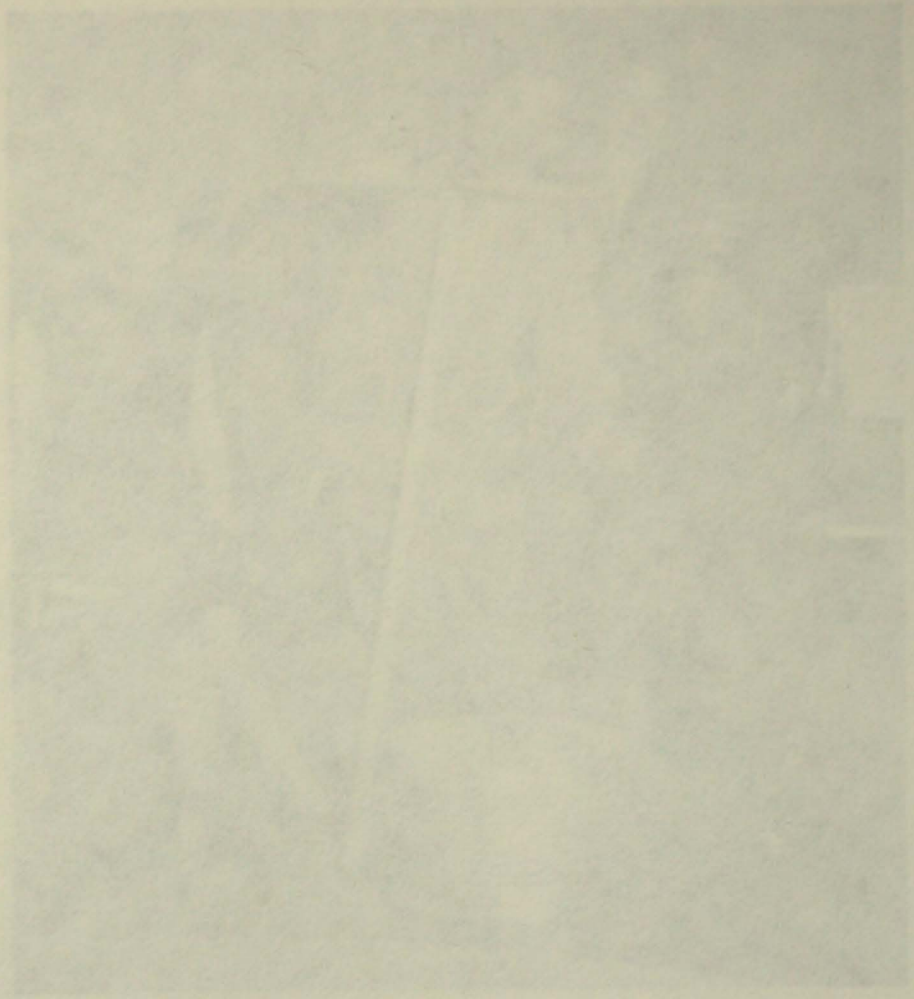


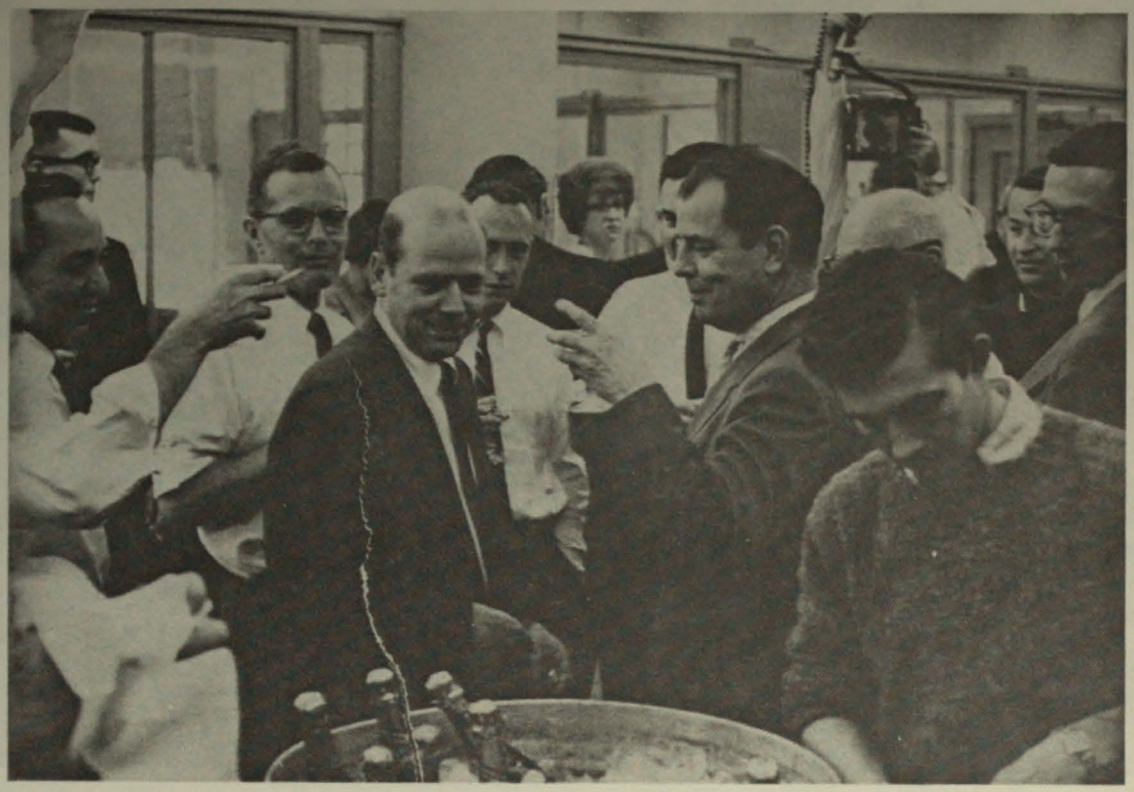
Left to right: Penny, Jon, Skip, and Tony Newhall.

Left to right: Barbara Taylor, Scott Newhall, Audrey Waterman. A night at the Newhall's Berkeley home, 1951.

Photographs by Frank Ricci

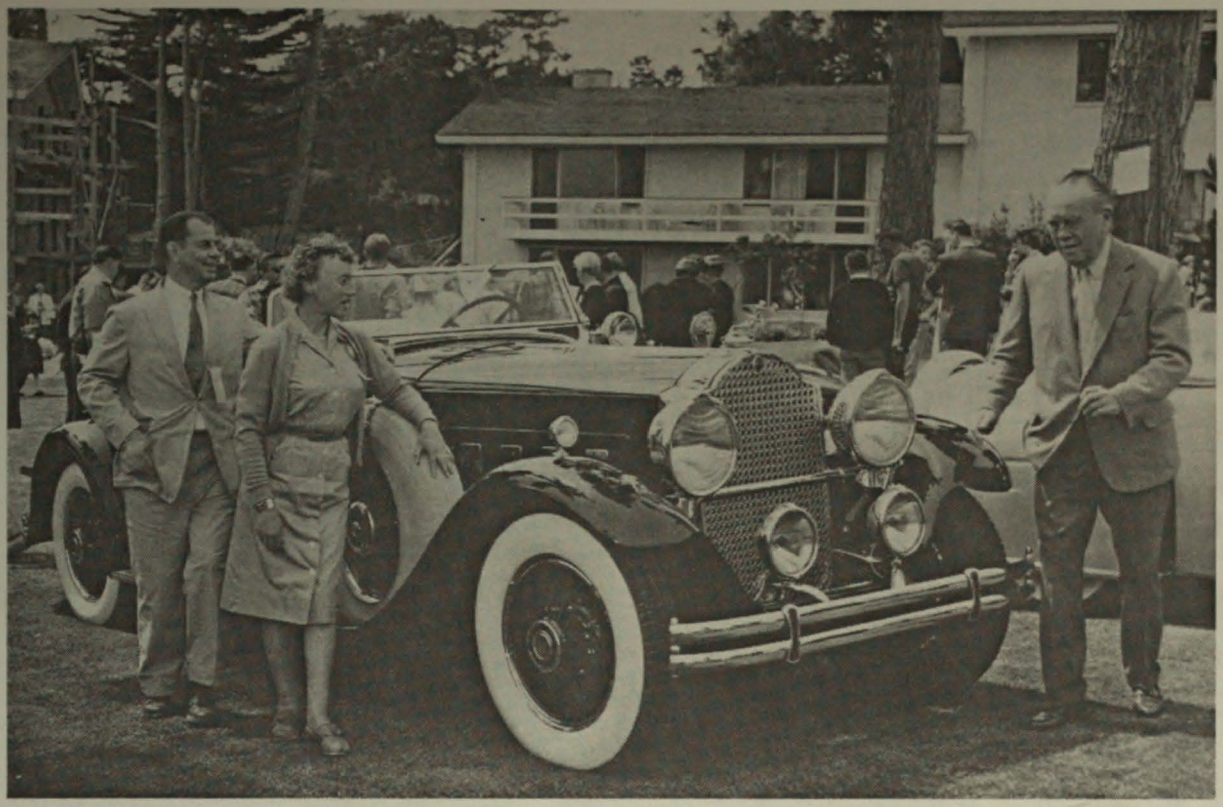




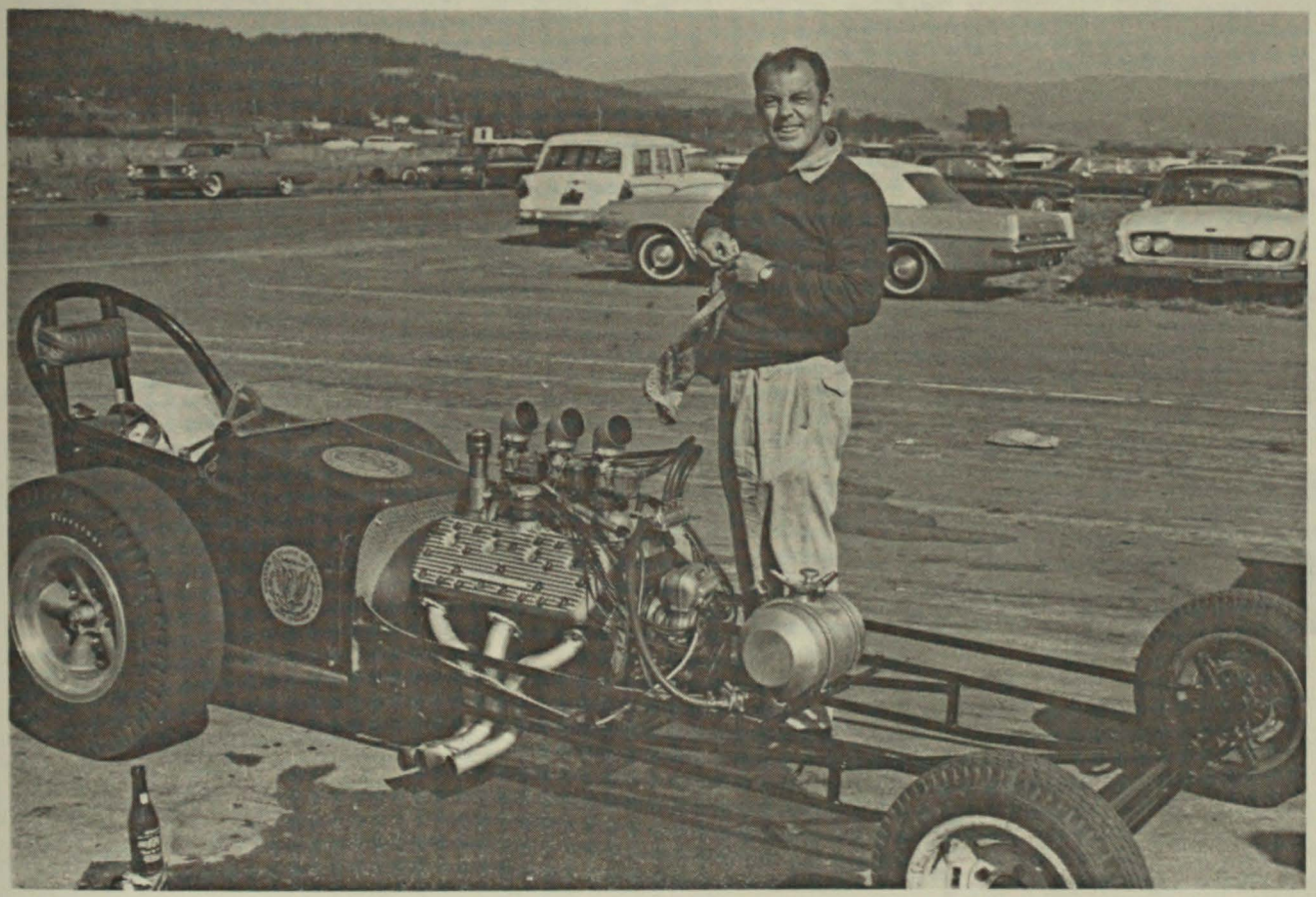


Top: Champagne, the day the Chronicle passed the Examiner in circulation, August 1960. Scott Newhall and Charles Thieriot, surrounded by Abe Mellinkoff, Templeton Peck, Dave Perlman, and behind Newhall, Bill German. Photograph damaged by fire.

Bottom: Herb Caen, Charles McCabe, Sheriff Matt Carberry, and Count Marco, August 1961.



Scott and Ruth Newhall with their grand prize-winning 1930 Packard, Pebble Beach, 1961. William H. Crocker on the right.



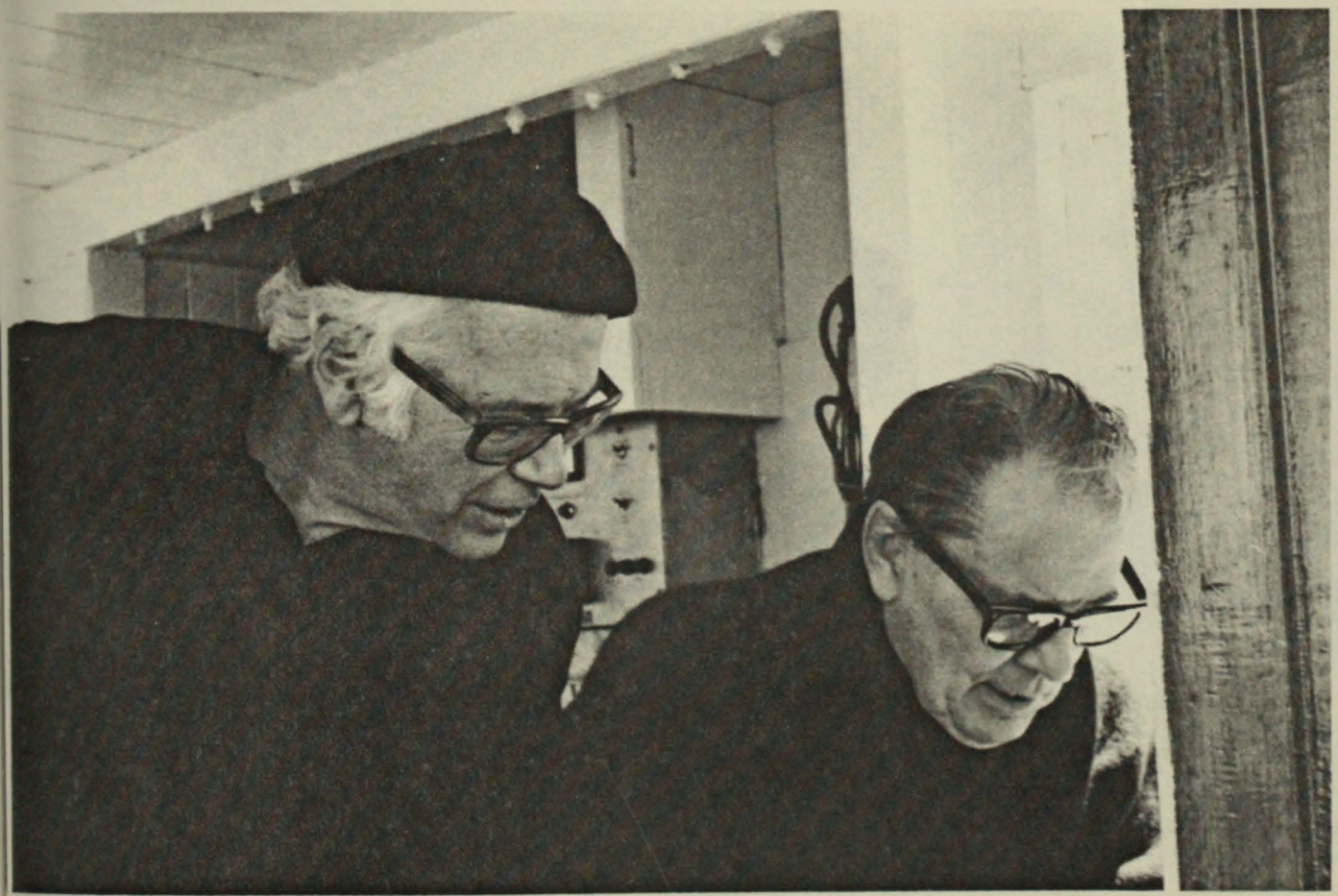
Scott Newhall and "Silver Dollar," Half Moon Bay dragstrip, 1964.

Dolly Rhee, Yvonne d'Angers, the Persian Lamb, Scott Newhall, and presentation dragster, 1966.

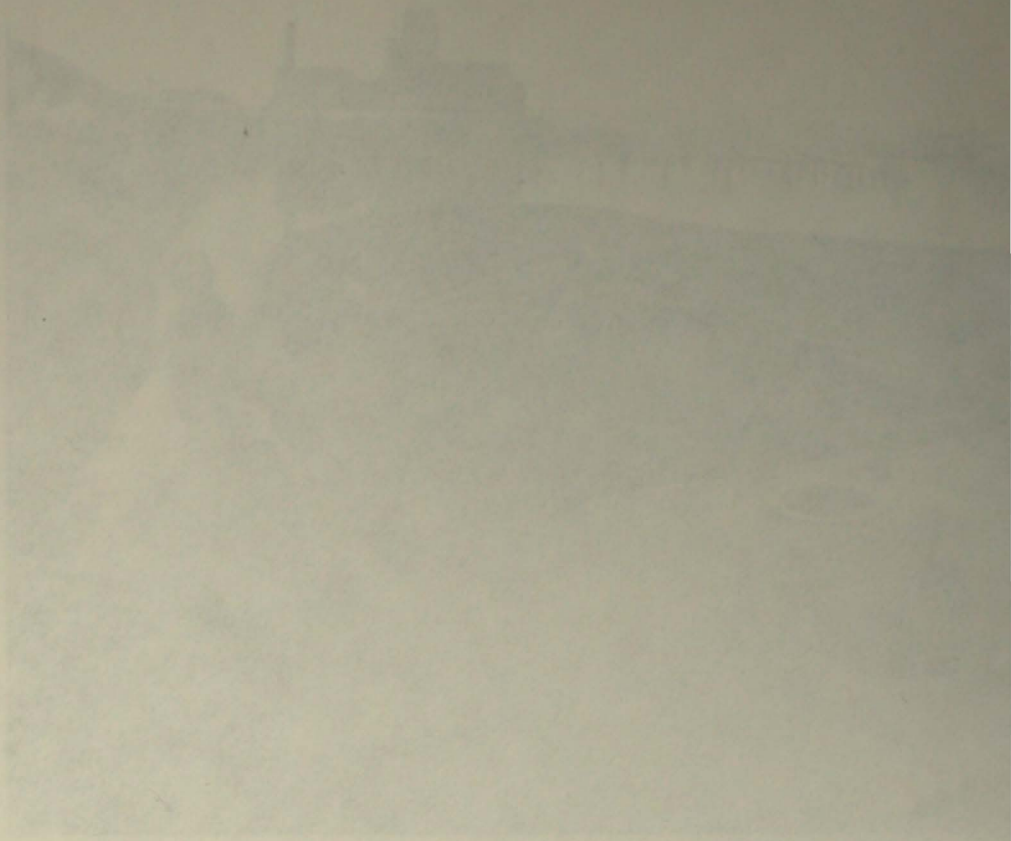
Photograph by Karl Kortum

Left: At the ship scrapping yard, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Scott Newhall discusses rehabilitation of the Eppleton Hall with Bill Bartz. 1969.

Below: Chief mate Karl Kortum and skipper Scott Newhall on the bridge of the paddle tug Eppleton Hall. They steamed the antique vessel half way around the world, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the North Sea to San Francisco. 1969.

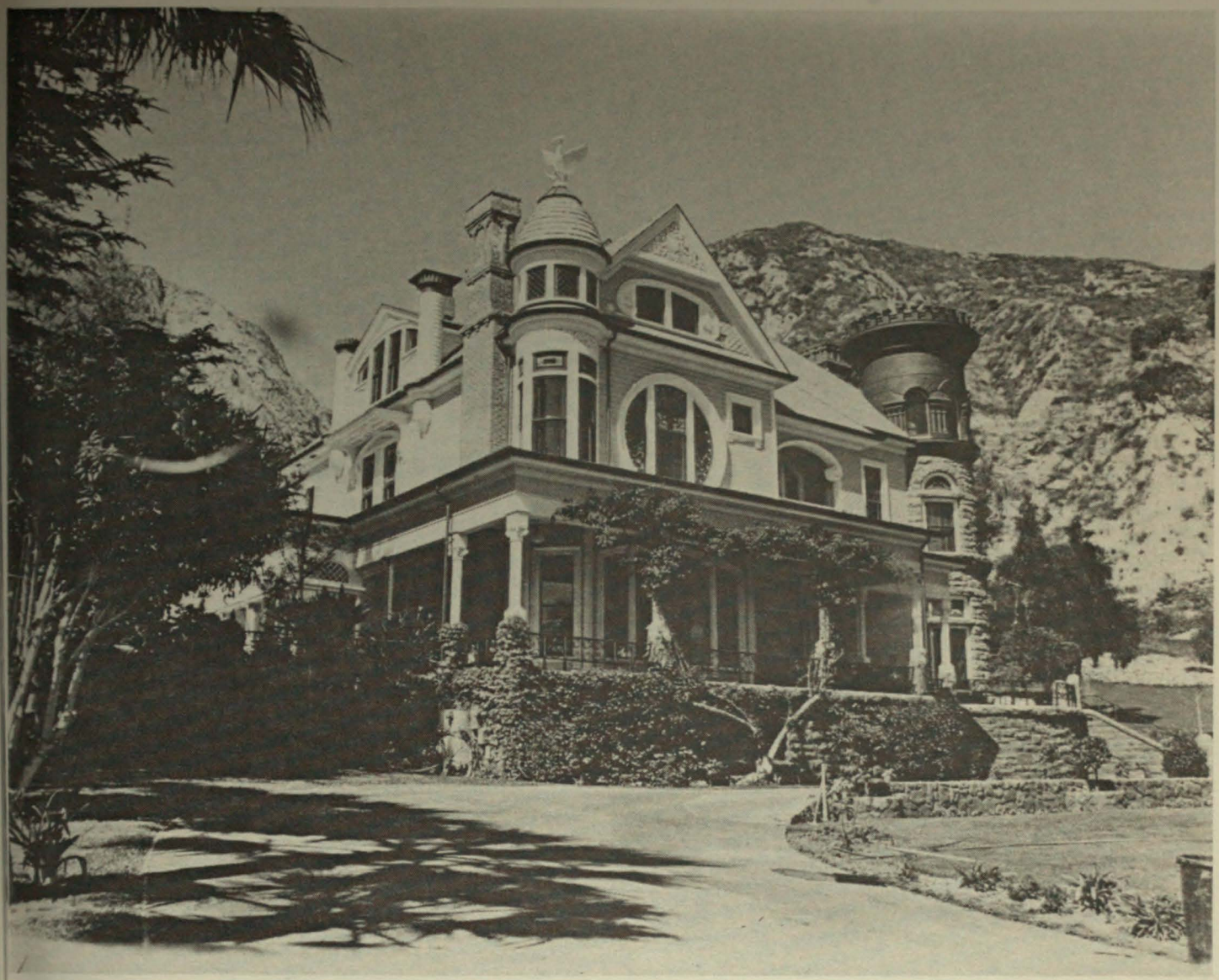


Photograph by Sarah Kortum



ott Newhall and Earl Hines at Newhall for Mayor headquarters, 1971.

Photographs by Sarah Kortum



HE DESIGN of the Piru mansion is attri-
ed to the architectural team of Samuel and
eph Cather Newsom, the most renowned
e-Victorian architects in California. It is a
ical Newsom rendering of the Queen Anne
torian style.

HE HOUSE WAS BUILT between 1886 and
0 by David C. Cook, who grew up in Illinois
l founded a company bearing his name to
olish religious books and Sunday school
ers—a company which still is in business as
Cook Publishing Co. of Elgin, Ohio. His
lth failed when he kwas a little past 40.
king a favorable climate, he selected Ventu-
County, then beyond the end of rail lines, and
chased the Mexican land grant known as
Rancho Temescal, which included the
sent town of Piru and several miles of
utary canyons. He laid out the town, built a
el, the Methodist church down on the
ner, and, finally, the mansion.

R. COOK was a devout Methodist, and set
to create both a profitable fruit ranch and a
Garden of Eden. Conforming to fruits
ntioned in the Bible, he planted dates,
pes, pomegranates, figs, apricots, and
es. The olives and pomegranates have
ne native" and now grow thickly in the town
on the hills around the house.

THE RAILROAD was completed about the time the house was under construction, which allowed for doors, windows, lumber, and tile to be shipped in, as well as for dried fruit to be sent to market.

THE MANSION was equipped with gas, since there were natural gas wells on the ranch, but it had no electricity or running water. The small circular structure uphill from the main house is the three-hole outhouse, which was used until the turn of the century when Mr. Cook, his health restored, departed for the East and left the mansion to his son. His son introduced two bathrooms, one upstairs and one down, and the Warring family, who bought the house in 1912, added a third bath in the 1940s.

THE PRESENT OWNERS, Mr. and Mrs. Scott Newhall, bought the mansion from the Warring estate in 1968. They went slowly about installing wainscoting, papering, and finally were modernizing the kitchen and painting the exterior in 1980-81. In February 1981 a spark from a painter's torch apparently escaped under the eaves to the attic, and the mansion burned to the ground. By the time the debris (86 dumpsters full of remains) was carted away, nothing remained but the floor tile, the stone work, the lower two-thirds of the tower, and two chimneys.

GUIDED BY PHOTOGRAPHS contributed many visitors to the mansion, and by the exp knowledge of people who had helped maint and restore it over the years, the Newha began reconstruction.

COMPLETION of the rebuilt mansion to two and one-half years. The materials, inclu ing all-redwood exterior siding, the stain glass, the tile patterns in the floors, and t carved wood of the original have been faithf ly reproduced. Thanks to skilled and imagir tive artisans, some additional design elemer (like the library ceiling) have been added. O of the additions is the bird, carved fr redwood, atop the small tower on the w front, where before the fire was an ejgg-shap finial. The bird is a sympolic phoenix risi from the ashes.

WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS, the furniture antique, as are the chandeliers. The design the kitchen is new, as are the bathrooms — o for each bedroom. The fire made it possible install modern heating and air conditioning, that the owners were able to combine the be of Victorian with the best of modern livin

VIII CHRONICLE PROMOTIONS

The Idea Behind the Promotions##

Riess: You said that you had some things on your mind for this interview. I think that probably some of them were the promotions.

Newhall: Well, we've talked about when we took over in '52 Charlie and I sat down and tried to figure out how much money we had, how we were going to promote the paper. I've jotted down some of the stories or series that we ran, which perhaps might not be described as great journalism. But these efforts had a tremendous response--and these promotions were tied in somehow with stories that we ran, just to get people talking. They did no harm, although they may not have contributed seriously to the knowledge of mankind.

You know I mentioned earlier, and some people I don't think agree with me particularly, that most newspaper readers and most Americans particularly are basically fourteen years old, and they're living in fairyland and they believe in fairy tales. They like to dig for treasure. They love every fallen woman to turn out to be a princess and so on, and every frog I guess to be a prince. There are certain human situations that I think the Americans really want to believe in. And so as our growth started we treated our good readers to the Fat Venus and the Persian Lamb.

Riess: I'm glad you're willing to talk about the promotions. I guess I thought you would be tired of it.

Newhall: I'm delighted to talk about them because some people have an idea that a promotion is necessarily hokum. In other words, the promotion and some essence of truth do not go hand-in-hand, that you're asking somebody to come inside the tent and see the bearded lady but you put a false beard on her before they come in. Well, that's not right. Our bearded ladies had real beards. If you have to put the whiskers on her, forget it, in my opinion.

As I keep saying, most people, no matter their age, living in

America anyway, are living in this wonderful world where anything wonderful can happen. You know, your ship is going to come in one day or a long-lost uncle is going to die and leave you a lot of money. Virtue is its own reward. The poor girl is going to marry the rich man and live happily ever after. Look how popular the California lottery is. It's the end of the American rainbow.

But people also have their ideas of what is proper and what is improper. They are titillated by what is not respectable. But they usually don't like to admit it.

Some of the Chronicle's early promotions, like the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt, was just a straight thing to get people together as San Franciscans having a good time and packing their picnic lunches and taking their families out to dig for treasure, and so on. They enjoyed it, but that was about all there was to it.

Dr. Miller and the Naked Animals

Newhall: The naked animals. The naked animals is a little bit like the coffee except the coffee's more legitimate. One of the early columnists that we took on when we got going at the Chronicle was a fellow called Dr. Miller, who wrote a column about animals.

I figured there are lots of pet lovers. There are lots of animal lovers, and people are really freaky about animals. Did you see the story in the paper this morning in the Chronicle, this is 1988, about you're not allowed to have cats in Marin County because they would endanger the field mice in the boondocks next door? Well, just think about that for a while.

Down in Newhall, our way, there's something called the three-spined unarmored stickleback. It's a fish, the most ordinary damned fish you ever saw, about two inches long, but it's an endangered species. And whenever things get too quiet down Newhall way at the Signal, we just start mentioning the stickleback and how some developer is bulldozing garbage too close to a stickleback pond, and the whole community goes up in arms to protect these miserable little fish. They're not even good eating. But you know how people are now. We're going to save every last animal, not matter how horrid it is.

Anyway, getting back to naked animals. Dr. Miller started his very successful pet column, and he's a very bona fide veterinarian. And we were going up to the P.U. Club for lunch one day. I used to take all these fellows out as much as I could, and I liked to keep in touch with them. He said, "You know, there's a funny guy in town here, he's going around preaching that animals ought to have clothes

on. It's called the Society for Indecency to Animals." My ears pricked up then and there and I said, "Well, who is he?" He said, "I'll tell him to come in and see you."

Well, this fellow came in. Allen Abel was the name he used. And he said he was a representative of C. or G. Clifford Prout (I forget all these names), who was the nephew of a very rich eccentric St. Louis or Kansas City millionaire. He stated that rich Mr. Prout left his money to put clothes on animals because he had been of the impression that animals were modest, and that they had gone through life mortified because people could come along, drive along the road, and they'd see a herd of cows grazing there in the pasture. He said, "This is indecent. It's terrible. We have no feeling for the cows. Now why do you think these cows always have their heads down when you drive by them? Because they's embarrassed!" [chuckles]

So I got George Draper to interview Allen Abel. Now look, for the record, obviously animal nudity does not sound to anyone, including me, as being a particularly substantial comment on the mores of the American people. But it is such an outrageous concept and so shocking a notion that anybody could go around seriously saying that animals are embarrassed because they're naked--of course, most of my fellow San Franciscans are going to be shocked that a paper would come along and run such a story with a seemingly straight face. They're sure that Father O'Flannigan or whoever in the local church would say, "Why no, this is ridiculous." They just couldn't accept this concept as being sort of semi-serious. It's the kind of notion that gets good sound, salt-of-the-earth people upset. They have to run to church or a saloon in order go to get rid of all this inner turmoil.

So we interviewed Mr. Prout. Allen Abel got hold of someone he called Clifford Prout. I got George Draper to take him out to the Fleishhacker Zoo and to talk about the nudity of the various animals. We took pictures of them out there, either the chimps or the African foxes or something, I don't know. But none of them had clothes on. Prout and Abel had some literature about bloomers for the elephants or whatever, and you know, shorts and brassieres for the cows and all that business. [laughter] And as I say, this is not really stop-press news, but we ran it and we didn't say anything except that Prout and his Indecency Society declared San Francisco to be an animal nudity disaster area. This is what the fellow said. I didn't want to check him out too closely.

Riess: Where did you run it? Front page?

Newhall: I think so. I hope so.

Riess: I mean, that's where you would put it?

Newhall: Either put it there or don't. I mean, for god's sake, you don't run it inside, which is what ninety percent of your editors would do. But you see the point exactly.

Riess: Yes, right.

Newhall: And so everybody, Jesus Christ, said what the hell is the Chronicle doing now?! It was quite a gimmick. Prout came to town and we eventually found out who he was. He's a very able guy, actually, he was a very able scriptwriter in Hollywood. But I didn't pursue it too much. I think the Examiner tried to do an expose on it. [laughter] But anyway, it didn't matter. The guy, he's with Woody Allen.

Anyway, while Abel was first in the office, and while I was talking with him, Dolly went outside and got Abe Mellinkoff, the city editor, to phone Kansas City and check out Prout. The results were inconclusive. Just for the hell of it, I wanted to scare Abel a little. But at the moment I couldn't find out if Prout, the so-called uncle, had lived there.

Anyway, we all got to be very good friends. As a matter of fact, we got Abel to write a column for the Chronicle later on. It was called "Professor Bunkerhill" or something like that. He still is around, and he is still in the business of practical jokes out of New York.

Riess: So you had lots of letters to the editor and you published them?

Newhall: Oh, a lot of outraged letters. Some people thought it was great. As I say, I'm not going to defend it as journalism, except it got people talking about the paper and I don't think it did them any harm. And besides that, I think it's good therapy once in a while to shock people. I can't defend it any more vigorously than that, except I thought it was amusing and enjoyable. And, of course, it occurs to me at the moment, there are still a lot of nude animals still running around loose.

Riess: Did you cook these promotions up when things were dull? They start out as a kind of laugh that you're having in the office with Charlie?

Newhall: Sure, sometimes. Sometimes you have to play them straight. You know, we played that straight. We never did say that any of this was true or anything else. We just said, "This is what they've said." Some people say it's Hollywood. And the Examiner, they go crazy because they were always trying to expose us as fakes.

Well, what are you going to expose? People were having a laugh? I don't know. But anyway, the Indency to Animals people did declare us to be a disaster area, particularly the Fleishhacker Zoo.

[laughter] You know, there were a lot of angles on it. And these kids outside, the reporters who would cover the stuff, they went along. They wrote wonderful stories, some of them, beautifully done, I think.

Fat Venus

Newhall: Another one. Women and beauty and sex, they're all kind of tied in, you know, the old fairy tale idea, and there's one story that's always sold--and of course these will go back to Biblical times, but I can't pull them all out--and that is the ugly duckling legend. (I'm just sort of pulling out the concepts.) So what is an ugly duckling? Well, this town is full of women who are grossly fat. And a wonderful story is the metamorphosis of this fat woman, and I mean gross, into a ravishing beauty, into a beautiful svelte princess who gets the choice of whatever she wants.

So I got Count Marco to pick up about seven or eight or nine very, very obese women. And we established the Fat Venus contest, with drawings of a very overweight Venus de Milo as our trademark.

The count took the seven or eight contestants out to dinner, and we had pictures of him surrounded by these mountains of feminine flesh at their "last feast." He took them over to Banducci's. (We had to promote Enrico Banducci to promote a free meal for them. That's the coffee house down there on Broadway.)

The count finally picked the girl he was going to use, and he was going to put her on his very own special diet, he was going to dress her, he was going to counsel her, he was going to follow her through a glorious metamorphosis, from this fat embryo stage to the slim, beautiful butterfly.

Now, I'm telling this story very frankly because it will give people a chance to think of what kind of an insensitive person was more or less involved with the Chronicle at that time. We got right up against deadline and Marco came storming in, tearing his hair, saying, "My god, I've got to turn in my Fat Venus column here right away and I have to include her first week's diet, the first day of the diet. Where is it?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I don't have any diet."

So I groaned, "Well, give me a copy of Vogue magazine," I said. So he came running back with that. I looked through and sure enough, there was something about black coffee and melba toast and a little gruel and this, that, and the other. I said, "Well, this won't kill the girl. Let's use this for tomorrow's diet." I wrote it all out on a piece of paper for him. So that was Count Marco's

Diet for the Fat Venus.

The Fat Venus became a long and fascinating journalistic experience. We would run her picture about once a week. We always played the Fat Venus with the gross Venus de Milo trademark in the women's section. I mean, it might have started out on page one, I don't know. The count would have her lunching at some glossy hotel or bistro, or going down to see some fashion show there, wherever it was. And it was very stylish. I sort of lost track, because it was all going along slowly--it takes time for any girl to shuck off 100 or 120 pounds. The Fat Venus ran as a feature in the women's section. We wrote about two or three times a week how she was slimming down. She started out at 240 or 250 pounds, something like that.

Well, I came up for air about five or six or seven months later because I suddenly realized there had not been much recent word on her progress. So I called him, "Hey, Count, what's happened here with this Fat Venus? What's your girl doing?" And there was a long silence. He said, "She's been cheating." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "She's not thin enough yet." I said, "I don't care. You get some pictures. We've got to run something to let the public know that this is a straight shot." (And this was straight. I was convinced that by now we'd have this gorgeous creature to display.)

It turns out she had gone down to about 180 or 190 or something, and then unfortunately she got herself looking good enough so a boyfriend came into the picture. I said, "You get some clothes on her and you get a picture." Marco came in two or three days later and he had a picture of Mary Ann, whatever her name was, leaning up against a eucalyptus tree with the Palace of Fine Arts in the background. She looked pretty hefty, but at least she looked like a woman. It was all right. And she was done up quite nicely, her hair and so on. So I said, "All right, we'll run the picture of her." I found out later that they had taken this dress, this clothing, and they had literally nailed her to the tree in order to pull her stuff in like this. And there she was nailed together to the tree like this with most of her lard behind her! [laughter]

Then it went on a little longer and I said, "Okay, how's it going now?" He said, "Just terrible. She's cheating again." I said, "Okay, look, we've got to go public with this. I can't have a catastrophe, because Charlie's getting a little impatient here. Look, put a private eye on her, and let me know what happened." So sure enough he put a private detective on her, and I think I still have the private detective's report.

> "7:00 P.M. Subject was seen leaving her home and getting into a 1957 Chevrolet driven by unidentified man. Followed trail of subject and driver to Blair's Ice Cream Store...

Subject entered ice cream store and was seen to order and consume a chocolate hot fudge sundae... Subject and escort left Blair's Ice Cream Parlor and started north on Alemany." Next time: "My car suffered a flat tire. Lost contact with subject," and so on.

That was the end of the private eye, but we knew what was going on.

So I told the count, "Okay, we've got to clean this up somehow." So we got the count all cranked up and we ran a huge story about "The Fat Venus Mary Ann has been cheating. What shall we do with her? Shall the Fat Venus be given another chance or is her crime inexcusable?" Really hundreds of people wrote in saying, "Give her another chance! Give her another chance."

We did indeed give Mary Ann another chance, and she still did not perform properly. So I said, "Okay, you've got to do something." There's this spa somewhere in Sonoma County, Boyes Springs, I think it was probably. We took her up there and I said, "Okay, lock her in a room. Leave somebody up there and lock her in that room and you don't let her out for about a month." And by golly, they kept her up there--passed her food to her through the door on a tray--and they finally sweated her down.

Riess: Was Mary Ann willing, or ultimately was she a victim in all of this?

Newhall: Victim? Listen, this was the best thing that ever happened to her, come on. She got her weight down and down, and we took her down to Hollywood and she had a screen test. I don't know what she did with it. And she came back. I don't know if she ever married this fellow or not, but I heard that about six months later she was back up to 225 pounds. But I'm sure it was the time of her life. I can't see that it did her any harm at all. All of a sudden she became somebody and she had a lot of publicity. She was an awfully nice girl, she really was. But she wasn't able to handle it, I guess.

The story about the princess marrying the page didn't work out too well that time, but it had fantastic appeal. People really wanted her to get her shot and get her second chance. Oh, and I'd forgotten, we provided her with a psychiatric counselor the whole time, by the way. She was a doctor, dietary specialist.

Riess: Yes, well that makes sense.

Newhall: Oh no, I wasn't feeding her the croissants or pretzels and Vogue's black coffee all the time. She formed a very serious attachment with this nice woman. That cost us a little money, you know, but it was fun. I think she probably had a pretty good time, I don't know. You might not agree with me as a woman, I don't know. Incidentally, the idea behind the Fat Venus was just to get people talking about

Mary Ann or the Chronicle, whichever you want, sort of "life in San Francisco." [See Appendices for the story's conclusion.]

Virginia City Camel Races

Newhall: The Territorial Enterprise, which was Lucius Beebe's weekly newspaper in Virgina City--every year they would announce the annual camel races. There would be all this advance publicity on it, about how camel entries were coming in from all over the desert area. Stories that camels were being sent north from Indio, and maybe Nevada, or Texas, or maybe a shipment from Arabia. I saw this publicity starting up every year, so I said, "Okay, they want a camel race, they'll have a camel race."

We called Bob Richards, who was then managing editor of the Territorial Enterprise, and we said, "Now look, you'd better go along with this, because you're going to be ass-deep in camels pretty soon." We played it up, absolutely straight, in the sports department and out in front, too: "The annual camel races in Virginia City were coming up, the Chronicle was co-sponsoring it with the Territorial Enterprise. All entries will be welcome."

Larry Wade, I think, was then the promotion editor of the Chronicle. I said, "Dear Larry, please go get us some camels." He was always a very good, loyal young man. He said, "Okay." So he went out to Fleishhacker Zoo. Carey Baldwin was then the director of the zoo. He said, "Sure, you can have whatever we've got."

We loaded these camels--he had two of them--into a truck. That was grand news, and we had pictures of them. We got Billy Pearson, a jockey by profession, who had starred on national radio or TV as an art expert, and John Huston, the great movie director, as jockeys. We had all the proper publicity ahead of time, and persuaded, urged and beat the gong for San Franciscans to come up and enjoy this grand old sport, this typical historic sport of Virginia City. And sure enough, a couple of entries announced they were coming up from Indio. You know, they've got some camels down there among the date palms and so on.

On the day of the camel race we all went up to Reno; we got a plane and went up there. Lucius was the official starter. John Huston was riding one camel, Billy Pearson the other, and everybody was decked out. There must have been twenty or thirty thousand people who showed up in this town, you know, because camel races aren't all that frequent. (Incidentally, ever since that time they've held camel races in Virginia City every year.)

The day we went up Larry said, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to

tell you, Carey Baldwin said that these animals have never been ridden." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, Carey told me you can train them." He said, "Get a two-by-four and if they don't do right, hit them." I said, "All right, we'll see what we can do." They put big badminton nets around the camels. They were one-hump animals, whatever those are, dromedaries or whatever, I forget, anyway, they had single humps. And the riders got on. There were four camels in all, I think, two from Indio. The race course was straight down the main street of Virginia City.

Riess: The badminton net is just to get some purchase on them?

Newhall: Yes, like a saddle. You strap the badminton nets around them so the jockeys could grab a lot of places, you see. Because a camel's not exactly like a polo pony.

Lucius shot off this big pearl-handled Colt 45 of his and off the animals went down the street. We had pictures going the whole time and everything. Billy Pearson's camel took a turn. He, the camel not Billy, apparently panicked at something, and he went galloping into the Catholic church right there on the street where Lucius had all the fights with the padre. It was on a Sunday. I don't know if there was a mass going on at the time. Billy got the camel out but in the process knocked an old gentleman under the bumper of a car parked near the church. All the miserable beasts finished the race. Some of them kept going, they wouldn't stop. I never saw the camels again, but I'm sure they got them back.

I was a little bit worried that this might have caused some trouble, because the camels had bumped people; there was a crowd and they pushed them around a little. Well, the most welcome letter I ever got about the races--this is why I knew the old man had been pushed down under the car--was from this woman whose father, she said, had been at the camel races. I said, "Oh my god, here come the lawyers."

She wrote, "I wanted to write you because my father, who is eighty-five and is fairly frail, was pushed aside or run over by this steed, but managed to roll under the bumper. He wanted me to tell you that this was the most glorious day of his life, he'll remember it as long as he lives, and we want to thank the Chronicle." I tell you, that was the most relief I've ever felt about anything.

Anyway, that was the camel race. It was just sort of an off-the-cuff deal. But it was good spirit and everybody would get into it. You know, we would come up with a promotion idea, discuss it, and then it would all sort of take place, don't ask me how.

Riess: Did the Examiner cover your stories? When you started something like this, then did they have to deal with it?

Newhall: In some cases, possibly. The Chronicle, you know, covers the Bay-to-Breakers race.

Riess: Yes. On the camel race the Examiner's sports writer would go to Virginia City?

Newhall: Oh well, they would have tried to debunk it. They probably had somebody there to see if we killed somebody, really. I really can't answer that question, I don't know. But their whole attitude at the time was knock down everything the Chronicle does.

The Persian Lamb###

Newhall: Yvonne d'Angers had started out in North Beach on a stage in a topless bar called Backstage, or Off Broadway, something like that. And as I think I mentioned earlier, there had been this thing about the Chronicle being "indecent," and the Examiner was always championing the "respectable" people. And of course they were losing circulation, slowing up the whole time, because everybody wanted to be indecent or at least to read what was currently going in San Francisco, the Babylon of the Pacific.

She was not exactly a French girl, Yvonne. She was a Persian girl--I guess it was called Iran by then, I'm not sure--who had come over here. She had a couple of brothers in school or something. She was a very, very pretty girl, she really was, I think, beautiful. Then she got herself doctored up with a lot of silicone or something and turned herself into a blonde. But for some reason or other her passport was not in order, and the immigration department wished to deport her.

What a wonderful chance this was to champion a poor wronged girl. I realized that it was a terrible thing, a mortal sin, to misuse this charming young lady who was about to be deported from the United States, where we protect so many unsanitary refugees or illegal aliens. "How can they do this?" The Chronicle will be the champions of this gorgeous creature and rescue her from our rotten, dictatorial bureaucratic government.

So we decided that Yvonne was the Persian Lamb . We ran pictures of her--she chained herself at one point to the Golden Gate Bridge saying, "I can't leave this country," in tears, you know. I never will forget, incidentally, the name of the immigration commissioner here in San Francisco at that time was Fullilove, believe it or not, Mr. Fullilove.

We sent our lamb back to Washington to interest Phil Burton in

the case. We ran a steady series of this curvilinear orphan posing at all the historic American landmarks--the Capitol steps, the White House, the Lincoln Memorial. On the steps of the Capitol we organized two or three substantial press conferences. We just kept pushing the Persian Lamb around, playing it for what it was worth--you know, it was not all that big a promotion, it was just typical--and we did succeed in keeping her here in America the Beautiful.

It had a happy ending. She married Voss Boreta, who was the owner of her original topless bar, and she became a matron. I think she had children. She's living in Marin County, out in Fairfax now, I think. But we were always very good buddies. She was a very nice girl, she really was. I liked her.

Riess: You could have used something like this as a way to focus on America's immigration policies and made heavy water of it. Did you do that?

Newhall: Well, underneath it all I was personally serious and disturbed. It was ridiculous that the immigration department would take a girl who is making some money, helping send her brothers through school, and deport her when they casually permit thousands of insanitary people to float around the country. They don't extradite <u>them</u>. But anyway, that was all.

Riess: You didn't focus that much on the issues.

Newhall: Well, it was the overriding, the leitmotif of all the pictures and stories.

<u>Anguillan Liberation</u>

Riess: What's the Anguilla story?

Newhall: Anguilla is a little island in the Caribbean. It's about a mile and a half wide, and about eight, ten miles long. It's right there in the curve where the Leeward Islands turn into the Windward Islands, right near St. Martin. Anguilla was a former British crown colony. Then when all the upset came and the British Empire began to dissolve and freedom and dignity returned to mankind, Anguilla was associated with St. Kitts and Nevis, another two islands, as a self-governing Caribbean state, associated with Great Britain.

There was a lot of unrest among the natives, there always is down there in the Caribbean. I don't know how well you know it. Have you been down there?

Riess: No.

Newhall: The Caribbean crowd are something mind-boggling. St. Kitts was run by a fellow called Bradshaw. He was the sort of president-for-life of this Anguilla-Nevis-St. Kitts triple arrangement. This is what happens in all these countries. It's never one man-one vote. It's a million men-one vote. And the Anguillans were getting the dirty end of the shaft, as they say in the trade, because every now and then some money would come through from Britain or the British foreign office or colonial office or whatever it is now, commonwealth office, I guess. So much money for Nevis, so much for St. Kitts, so much for Anguilla. Well, Bradshaw got his hands on all the money. He took the Anguilla money and spent it on Anguilla all right, except he did it by building a new big concrete wharf in St. Kitts and putting a big sign over it, "Anguilla Landing." And that was Anguilla's share.

Anyway, they had a lot of problems. Anguilla is full of the descendants of a whole lot of slaves who--I don't know if they were ever freed, I think their masters just left and there they are, so I guess they're free. Anyway, they have about ten different names on the island, the Hodges, the Gumbs, the Websters, the Adamses, and so on, and there they are. They catch a few lobsters and that's it. It is a miserable place. It's got two or three beaches, but there are no trees on the island, they've all been long since cut away, or burned off or something. There never were very many. Anguilla was just a rocky, inhospitable outcropping. But today it is materializing as a resort island with nice beaches and some comfortable hotels--or at least so the advertisements say.

Well, the revolution started with a beauty contest in Anguilla in 1967, and the winner turned out to be a ringer from St. Kitts, not an Anguillan girl at all. The contest ended up with a shooting, and somebody was killed, one person was, I think, and the Anguillans declared their independence from St. Kitts and Nevis. They got up a militia, you know, a rag-tag affair.

I read this in a wire story. There was some casual coverage of the rebellion. It was all very legitimate foreign news. The British navy got interested. (I had recently seen "The Mouse That Roared," the Peter Sellers movies of a very tiny little nation that was declaring war on the rest of the world or had an H-bomb or something.) This must have been in '67, things were kind of quiet then, I had a vacation coming up, so I asked George Draper, a Chronicle reporter and an old friend of mine, to join me on a safari to Anguilla and see what the action was. And we could drum up some front-line coverage of the revolution.

All outside communication with Anguilla supposedly had been cut off. We landed at St. Martin, which is a neighboring island, part of it owned by the Dutch and part by the French. The governor of the Dutch part just happened to be in the airport when he saw two

American reporters arrive. There was a plane outside that apparently had been chartered by the Anguillans, to fly some of their people back. (There had been a number of inter-Caribbean conferences about the independence of Anguilla. It was a legitimate interesting story, you know, correspondents were trying to get in.) There was one vacant seat on the plane. I said to George, "You get over there; you're going to cover it. I'm not." As the plane took off the governor came storming in waving his walking stick in hand saying, "No more flights to Anguilla."

So I went down to a little hotel, and the next morning I went over to the French half of the island and I persuaded a local boatman with an outboard motorboat to run me over to Anguilla. Crossing that lousy strait, I'll tell you, in this boat was a miserable experience. I had a white linen suit on, like a Victorian planter. Well, the suit got greasy from the bilges, it was one hell of a mess. The northeast trade winds made the crossing very rough. This crossing was very similar to a rough, uncomfortable voyage from Long Beach to Catalina Island in a cockle shell.

I landed in Anguilla and was welcomed, in a manner of speaking, by some derelict guerrillas toting pistols and worn out carbines, bummed a ride in a truck down to the Valley, as they called it. There was nothing on that island, mind you, but a few trees and nice beaches, lots of rocks and the wind and a couple of churches. There are a few houses along in a row there in the biggest town.

I met George at the airport, which was pretty much the center of information on the island. The landing strip was interesting. The Anguillans had covered the strip with these old oil drums so that "enemy aircraft" could not land and take over their island. They were expecting an invasion!

We covered the rebellion of Anguilla in a series of stories. We taped most of it. I was very interested in it. I really was. It's not every day people are fighting for liberty and so on. At the island we were living at Mrs. Lloyd's boarding house. Mrs. Lloyd was a motherly matron but the cuisine at her lodging house was spartan, tuna sandwiches--we ate tuna sandwiches or tuna salad for five days, lunch and dinner, and sometimes for breakfast.

One day in walked Professor Kohr, Leopold Kohr. He was an academic character whom Howard Gossage had dredged up. The good professor, a mild little man, was currently ensconced at Puerto Rico University where he was teaching the virtues of "smallness" as a social alternative. He's over in Wales somewhere now.

Kohr preached a sociological doctrine in which small is good: small is beautiful and the world, you know, is too big now and we have to break it down into small units. He had been fascinated with Anguilla because here was an island of about the area of San

Francisco if you stretched it out, maybe a little bigger.

I should make the story brief. Oh, but at one point after a couple of days on Anguilla we thought the provisional president, Peter Adams, had been kidnapped. We grabbed a plane and finally found him in the air in another plane over St. Martin and got him back. It was interesting!

Howard Gossage, the San Francisco advertising man--I think I mentioned him earlier in another respect--was intrigued by the Anguilla revolution. After George and I returned to San Francisco I got together with Howard and Dr. Gerry Feigen and planned to spring Anguilla from St. Kitts and get them back into their old status as a crown colony of Her Majesty the Queen, which is what they wanted. The Anguillans felt that they would be supported better by Britain than by Bradshaw. Oh lord, it was very complex. (A whole book, Under a Caribbean Sun, has been written by some Englishman who started giving us a hard time.)

In order to get things rolling, we brought the Anguillan government--the bankers and president and vice-president and foreign minister--to San Francisco. The foreign minister actually was an American citizen who had a fuel oil company in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, but he declared himself to be the foreign minister of Anguilla. They all flew into San Francisco. We borrowed the mayor's car. We designed flags for Anguilla and put the flags on the car and had press conferences in town. It all makes no sense, but anyway, it was intriguing. This was sort of half Chronicle and half me. The Chronicle covered it straight.

I didn't use the Chronicle in this, really. Some people might think so. But I was honestly interested in it in a personal way. I've always been interested in coins. And we were going to try to save Anguilla, because they had been cut off from all funds, and there was a British navy gunboat supposedly lurking offshore. (I don't think it was really there at all.) The Anguillans had the militia out and the padre, the local Anglican clergyman, had spyglasses and smoke signals. It would have been a beautiful movie. Take my word for it. But they needed money.

Riess: So what happened?

Newhall: I was interested in coins. I said, "I will provide your coinage." And I almost lost my shirt. I got 11,600 silver dollar-sized coins, mostly from Latin America, and some from I think Yemen or Oman or something, and I counterstamped them. I had them struck here. I obtained some "ANGUILLA DOLLAR" dies, and ran the trial strikes with the dies in the machine shop in the basement of the Chronicle, because there were some hydraulic presses down there. The coins were stamped "Anguilla Liberty Dollar." This is not all exactly journalistic, but anyway, it was sort of part of the act, 11,600

Anguilla silver dollars. I have it all written down somewhere.

Then I sent Larry Wade, the Chronicle's promotion manager, down to the Caribbean with suitcases full of these dollars. They're heavy, boy. They're all silver. This was just when silver was going out of circulation. You see, silver coinage went out in '64 and this was about '67. And the idea was that the Anguillans would take these Liberty Dollars and put them into circulation. They would reimburse me for my cost and keep for their government everything they could collect above the original cost. Coin collectors will collect anything. Commemorative coins, which are usually circulated and sold at prices above their silver value, have been a big business in the Caribbean area for centuries.

Well, the Anguillan government officials began fighting among themselves and they all began thinking that somehow we were cheating them. They tried to steal all the money from Larry Wade. At one point I got a suitcase with ten thousand one-dollar bills and sent it down to Anguilla in order to loosen things up around the place. The members of the provisional government began confiscating that. It was a wild time. Anyway, I did mint all the Anguilla Liberty Dollars, and I sent them down.

The New York Times got on to this. Remember, the Chronicle was not any part of this latest Anguilla activity. This was a free enterprise, charitable effort by Howard Gossage and his group, "the San Francisco Group," as the Times called it. The Times was convinced we were trying to do something to take advantage of Anguilla. It was a very strange thing.

In the end, I gave the Anguillans about two or three thousand of these silver coins, so I wound up with about eight or nine thousand dollar-sized coins that were worth at that time I guess five or six dollars apiece. I finally was able to sell them for what cost I had in them. Then I washed my hands of the whole thing. This could have been a great story but unfortunately it seemed to get out of hand.

The Anguillans are famous mariners. They have fast schooners. We were going to sail them up to New York. They wanted to get into the United Nations--see, that's a pretty good deal--so we wanted to sail them up to New York and tie up their schooner in the East River there, and then their foreign ministers and ministers of justice, and the president of Anguilla would try to join the United Nations. It would be pretty good copy. However, they never did come to New York, the British took them back in 1971, and I guess that's where they are today. The Anguilla revolution never exactly jelled as the perfect news story. It was just too complicated.

We covered it straight in the paper. I was pretty sensitive, and because of my own personal interest in this particular matter I

really didn't want to hit it too hard. If I hadn't been involved, I would have really given it a much larger play in the paper.

Riess: Did you write any of the stories yourself?

Newhall: No, I don't think so.

Riess: Did you file some stories as F. Scott Valencia? Where did you use F. Scott Valencia, as a by-line?

Newhall: From Brazil, for the Newhall Signal, not for the Chronicle. Ruth and I went down to Peru to pick up our son Tony who had been two years in the Peace Corps. We came home across the Andes and down the Amazon. I just wrote some color stories I think for the Signal. This had totally nothing to do with the Chronicle at all.

Riess: Did Anguilla have a fairy tale ending?

Newhall: Well the Anguillans got away from St. Kitts and regained their colonial status, which is what they wanted. However the Anguilla story gave the Bay Guardian a reason for attacking the Chronicle. They tried to make this into a big Chronicle plot. I mean really, it was very murky.

Riess: Because of a conflict of interest?

Newhall: Well, just because of the Chronicle, or because of me. You know, Bruce Brugman has to make a buck, and he always has to have an enemy or a villain. And he was always taking off against the Chronicle. He treated this, I think personally, very unfairly, saying that Anguilla was a Chronicle plot, because I made these coins, some of them down in the basement there. He couldn't follow it.

Riess: [chuckles] It does sound complicated.

Newhall: It is an interesting story. Ruth took voluminous tapes on the whole thing from everybody who was involved. And it was very involved. It would have made, I think, a fascinating and a great movie, but it didn't jell, and it was not essentially a Chronicle project. I'm sure Charlie would have disowned it and so would I have, as editor of the Chronicle, except in terms of what the Anguillans were doing.

The Last Man on Earth

Newhall: Okay. Then what else is there? "The Last Man on Earth" was a big one. Now I don't know how much time you've got there.

Riess: Well, I've got eight minutes.

Newhall: Maybe you can do it in eight minutes.

Riess: I've got more tape.

Newhall: Oh. Well, this was the biggest single promotion perhaps journalistically that the Chronicle ever undertook, at least in my period there. Certainly from a journalistic standpoint there's been more attention paid to it nationally, professionally, than any other promotion, with the possible exception of the coffee thing, which fascinates the national magazines.

Riess: I don't understand why people get outraged, frankly. Why there's this sort of moral indignation about these promotions kind of surprises me.

Newhall: You must remember, the one thing that will bug the profession, the journalistic establishment, if they don't approve of you, the one thing that really drives them up the wall is success. On the other hand, if the paper had not done these things and if we had not promoted ourselves, and had started just to sort of slowly slip downhill or under the surface, they would all have said, "Gee, the Chronicle was a grand paper. Isn't it too bad they couldn't make it?" or something like that, I promise you.

Riess: Okay, I see what the other side of it is, yes.

The Fantasy

Riess: Now, how did you cook up "The Last Man On Earth?"

Newhall: And that was "cooked up," all right. I have always felt, in line again with my feelings about the aspiration and interest of the average person, that the greatest basic adventure story is the Swiss Family Robinson or Robinson Crusoe legend. There's something that any young man, and I suppose young woman, too, who read the stuff could never forget. The idea of the desert island and human survival.

Riess: And as you pointed out newspapers had sponsored the trips to the Pole.

Newhall: Oh yes, papers had done that kind of thing. Those were adventure stories. But Robinson Crusoe was a story of man's survival and the footprint in the sand and building the house and so on.

I had always felt that a great promotion, or if you will, a

great stunt--I don't know what you want to call it--or experiment, would be to see if modern man could survive in the wilderness. And I talked about this for two or three years to some of my colleagues, fellow editors. Stanleigh Arnold, who was the Sunday editor of the Chronicle, came in one day and said, "You talked about this deal of sending somebody out in the wilderness with some twine and a knife maybe and nothing else. Bud Boyd"--the Chronicle's fish and game editor--"says he'd love to do this." I said, "You mean you think he could go out there and survive? Okay."

I talked to Bud about it and I laid it on him hard. I told him his adventure would have to be factual and have to be straight. I'm saying this because I want this in the record because it's been so badly misreported. I promise you, no editor in his right mind would purposefully mislead a reader. Misinformation will surely come back to haunt you, believe me, as you will see.

So Bud said, "Yes," he'd do it. Then he said, "My wife and children want to come, too." I said, "That's not the idea, Bud. Do you think they can last?"

We were going to put Bud out in the wilderness somewhere in California with nobody around. He was going to survive with the basic few items he had with him. What he would do, he would establish with a ranger somewhere a location, a hollow tree stump or log, and would leave a record--a daily diary--of how he was doing this, and the ranger would come and pick it up and bring it down to headquarters and phone it in to us. And it had to be a secret place where--we couldn't divulge where the messages were to be hidden or obviously somebody would come in and try to spoil it.

The title we came up with was "The Last Man On Earth." The idea was that we would assume for the purpose of this experiment or this adventure that the big bombs had exploded and that Boyd was up above in the hills and all the poison was down below and he was surviving.

Riess: Right, it's like the George Stewart novel, Earth Abides.

Newhall: Maybe he wrote it before or after, I don't know. But that was the idea. It was, again, just Robinson Crusoe out there to see if he could feed himself, clothe himself, protect himself and so on and survive for I think four weeks or maybe five.

So it was a big deal. We had our own feature syndicate by this time, and we outlined it, we had promotion brochures, and about twenty or thirty papers across the country went for it. It is a fascinating story.

Riess: How do you sell a story?

Newhall: We send them a brochure and a synopsis of the idea so they can see what we are talking about. And then, "Do you want to sign up for the release?" And we signed up a lot. All the middle western papers, of course, went for it, and I think some of the eastern ones.

The Launch

Newhall: So we fixed on a place that Boyd was going to make this experiment, on a lake up in the Siskiyou or Trinity Alps, up there by Yreka up above Red Bluff and Dunsmuir. It's about a day by pack animal up to the isolated lake.

Well, Bud insisted he wanted to bring his wife and his kids, and he had a little kid, a daughter, and another daughter who was having an unhappy love affair, so she didn't go. We hired this old DC-3 to get him up there one day. And oh, there was all the bugle-blowing and the advance stories, "Can he make it or can't he?" And we designed a standing headline that was supposed to run every day with the Last Man's daily diary.

On the way up there, just before we took off, Bud said, "Oh, I forgot something." He went somewhere and he came back on board the plane and Larry Wade or I saw that he was carrying with him--I forget what, I guess it was an ax. We said, "Hey Bud, you can't use this. This is not part of the deal." In other words, this was absolutely straight.

We flew to Scott Valley with Bud and his family. From there we could drive to a ranch house where we hired some horses to pack them in--no canned food supplies, no nothing. There were about ten of us in the party.

At the ranch house they served all of this fried chicken at lunch. I told Bud, "You and your family had better load up on this food because that's all you're going to get for a while."

He had a pencil or pen with him, and papers, and they had established a place where the guy who owned this sort of dude ranch up there would go in every day at a certain hour to pick up Bud's daily diary every two days or something [laughing]. On the way up a bear came breaking out of the brush and galloped across the front of the truck we were in, and I think it scared them all to death.

Oh, and in the party that flew up to Scott Valley we had with us a priest from a church down here on Army Street. He was one of three impartial observers. It's important in a sense who they were. They flew up with us, and they watched Bud and his family go into

the brush.*

Well, obviously in publishing Bud's stories there was going to be a time lag. We couldn't print by 6 o'clock at night what Bud was doing up there on the mountain at 5:00 or 6:00 that same day. We figured there had to be about a seven-day time lag between the daily diary entry and its publication on the Chronicle's front page. Bud's story would come down the hill, the ranger would pick it up and either phone it in or send it to the paper. We started out "Day 1, Day 2, Day 3" and so forth. There was to be no dateline on the stories because we just couldn't do it. And everybody knew that. And besides, we had to send the daily diary to all our newspaper syndicate customers so that they could publish them the same day we did.

The first day's story told about how the Boyd's had to find a place to sleep, and had to start eating frogs, and how they sharpened sticks to stab the frogs, and this, that and the other.

Riess: You had removed the ax?

Newhall: Oh yes, absolutely, I grabbed it. I will take lie detector tests. From our point of view this was an absolutely straight shot. I thought it was fascinating, and I wasn't sure Bud could make it, particularly with his family along. (I should have absolutely refused permission for the family to go, as you will see.)

The Rumpus

Newhall: Along around the time we were just about to start running the series, there was a Concours d'Elegance, or a meeting of the Classic Car Club, down south. I used to restore classic cars as a hobby, kind of, and I was down there showing this car, an old 1931 Packard roadster. On the way back Ruth and I stopped at Paso Robles at the Paso Robles Inn. And there was a message waiting for me, "Call the office." Bud had been up in the bush about a week; in other words, the Chronicle was in the process of publishing the Last Man series, the first or second day, and there was Stanleigh Arnold on the other end of the phone saying, "My god, I've got the worst news. Bud's out of the bush."

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*[For the record the three "official impartial observers" were: California's Attorney General Stanley Mosk; Rear Admiral A.G. Cook, Civil Defense Chief of San Francisco; and Reverend Francis J. Ford, O.F.M., Air Force Reserve chaplain. The flight to Scott Valley took place on July 10, 1960--S.N.]

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Newhall: I said, "Oh god, what is the trouble?"

He said, "Well, he can't make it."

I said, "Well, where is he?"

He said, "He's up there at the ranch."

I said, "Okay, can he get to a phone?" Here the series was just starting and we had this marvelous successful thing going, and it was great. We had received about a week's worth of stories, and they were really very interesting and very good. Finally I got Bud on the phone and there he was, beaten, I said, "Bud, you promised. What is going on? Bud, this is history." Anyway, I just talked to him for about fifteen or twenty minutes, and I said, "Bud, you've got to go back up there and don't give me a lot of trouble on this. The reputation of the Chronicle is at stake on this," and so on and so forth.

"Well, okay, I'll do it." So apparently he started back up again. The next day the Examiner started playing front-page stories: "'The Last Man on Earth' Hoax: The Chronicle is doing this, the Chronicle is doing that." Every one of our syndicate clients who were getting the stories heard about it. They all cancelled and everybody, including the wire services, began playing the story as if the Chronicle was trying to hoax everybody. The Examiner reported with a hullabaloo that Bud had gone up there and was living on a patio somewhere, you know, with a Bloody Mary in one hand and a shotgun in the other, I don't know.

Well, in fact Bud had come down. He went up again and--. I'm a little fuzzy, then he came down again or something, but by this time we had all of his stories, less than two weeks worth. I just don't remember exactly the day that the Examiner story broke. We had about eight or nine stories, and indeed Bud had failed and had come down. We were running the diary faithfully, Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, and so on. I think the Examiner started its "expose" on about Day 3 or 4.

The "Examiner"

Newhall: What happened was--and the Examiner had a hell of a good story--they put Ed Montgomery, their ace investigating police reporter on Bud's trail. He figured out where Bud was, somehow, and had gone up and found the remnants of the Boyd camp, and he found tin cans and stuff like that. Of course this was all news to me. It was horrible. It

was horrible. In the meantime Bud had come down and we had got him to Stanley's home in Mill Valley.

I said, "Stanley, get him out of town. Take him down to a motel somewhere and lock him up. Just keep him incommunicado." I was just trying to straighten this thing out, I was trying to protect the stories that were going out. And the stories still were telling the truth, and in the proper sequence we reported that the Last Man wasn't going to make it. It got very complex. They got Bud down to a motel near Carmel or Monterey and really holed him up there because, of course, gee, the national press or the news magazines and the Examiner were on the hunt for him.

As I said, Ed Montgomery went up after Bud had left, and with a little trowel or shovel he began going through the cesspool that the Boyd family had left behind them to find out what kind of food they'd been eating. The full Last Man saga is a totally fascinating story, really. I can recreate it, or someone can recreate it if they just go back and take a look at the way the stories were published in the Chronicle and in the Examiner.

At that time of course I felt a little bit like this poor guy with a one-man band because I had the national magazines on us. Our syndicate customers were all cancelling, the Examiner was charging us with hoax. I called up our lawyers--I didn't talk to Charlie or anybody at that moment, we didn't need a lot of conversation just then, we needed action. At an early point I called our attorneys and said, "Look, will you file about a ten-million-dollar slander or libel suit against the Examiner for publishing the fact that we were perpetrating a fraud or a hoax. The Chronicle is in fact honest. You've got to counter all this stuff." So we came out with a big headline, "Chronicle Sues Examiner For Libel." It was one of those things. And it made a hell of a rumpus. There was some national exposure on it.

Ed Montgomery did in fact find that Bud had not been living necessarily on toads or lizards or on goose grass or whatever grows up there in the hills. His wife, I think, had suffered some kind of colliwobbles, and the Boyd party did in fact come down out of the hills a week or so after the start, maybe even earlier. I wish I could remember it a little more clearly, but it was all published in the Chronicle. And I talked to Bud when I got back to San Francisco. I said, "Bud, you've got to tell me the truth. You have put this paper in a terrible position, just terrible. You've got to tell me the truth. What did happen?"

He had written in one of his diary stories about how, golly, what really saved him, they found hanging from the limb of a tree a cache of food and supplies that had been left behind by a hunter--he said. And in the cache he said they found some food, you know, and all that stuff. Bud was lying in his teeth--to me. And he told me

that on the way out he passed a group of horsemen and Bud said, "Good luck fellows, it's pretty tough up there." Well, he was trying to convince me that somebody else might have left the tin cans in the privy in his camp. I guess, I don't know.

He never told me the truth. I never knew--I don't know to this day really exactly what went on, because Bud never levelled with me. As far as I was concerned that was the end of my association with Bud. The Chronicle and the Examiner settled their differences when the Examiner did in fact publish a retraction saying that the Chronicle had covered this story "according to the finest traditions of journalism," and so we withdrew our suit.

I think this story was legitimate. It was fascinating enough that it caused this rumpus. I don't know that Bud would have survived a real pop gun blast, let alone an atom bomb from the way he operated up there.

The Real Success Story

Newhall: Now the most fascinating aspect of the Last Man saga is this--and it's almost an historic part of this whole interviewing that's going on with me now. On the third day of "The Last Man on Earth" the Chronicle passed the Examiner in circulation and we've been ahead of the Examiner ever since. And this was the end of the Examiner. Bud Boyd and "The Last Man on Earth" were an historic promotion. I'm sorry it turned out in the mess that it did, but it was lot of fun while it was going on, even so, you know, it kept you busy.

But I have always been sensitive to the fact that many people, and mostly these sort of professional managing editors and executive editors around the country, were convinced that we, the Chronicle, were trying to hoax the people. It was Bud who was hoaxing us!

Riess: I used that word "hoax" with you once before and I realized you were sensitive to it.

Newhall: Yes, that's why.

Riess: So what did you do? Did you fire Bud?

Newhall: No, he just sort of passed out of the picture. I think he began taking money or something for publicity in his woodsman's column. And he got down to Central America and some travel promoters used him as a front, you know, the Bud Boyd Nature Camp or Hunting Camp in Costa Rica, some kind of a promotion. He may have left the Chronicle, I'm not quite sure. I never would fire him because that would have been too much of a mess. He discredited himself

thoroughly. We never publicly called Bud a liar. We just let the thing die. Eventually Bud died down there in Central America of a coronary, and that was the end of Bud. I have never seen a human being morally collapse the way he did. This was a terrible thing.

Riess: I think your heart was in this survival exercise because you had already gone through it a couple of times in your life in some way.

Newhall: Well, one could do it, but when we were in Mexico there had been other people within a day's ride or something. Well, look, I do think someone could have survived up there. But for Bud to bring his wife and kids, it was ridiculous. I had very bad judgment to allow that. But I think otherwise he probably wouldn't have gone. I don't know, it was a great disappointment, because I didn't want to tarnish--. But this is part of the reason people will talk about how the Chronicle is such a shameless sort of newspaper. We get a lot of that, or used to, and I guess they still do.

Anyway, we did pass the Examiner then and we just continued to climb. That was the Examiner's summit or peak and they declined basically ever since.

Riess: I can see how they were powerless, although Ed Montgomery apparently did very well on that.

Newhall: Yes, he did a terrific job. And I tell you, personally I would never have gotten my hands in there and dug under their privy with a little spade.

Riess: After somebody like Ed Montgomery does a great job like that, did you ever hire them away?

Newhall: Oh, we hired a lot of their people. Let's see, who did we hire? Herb Caen, of course, came back, but he had been ours originally. Yes, two or three young men came over. Michael Grieg, he was a reporter. Harry Jupiter in sports. Some of their reporters. But they didn't have anybody at a higher level we were interested in, I don't think.

One last comment. On the Bud Boyd story, some people would say, "You're an editor, and when it failed you should have published it as a news story." I said, "Why? Look, you read Dick Tracy in the paper every day, but the editors don't publish the conclusion of each episode ahead of time. You publish it day by day and then the end inevitably happens on schedule." I couldn't understand what they were all so upset about. I really can't still.

They were frightened because they knew that Bud had failed. We didn't say, "The last man fails" before we'd published the whole story, which I think is a very interesting story. I just don't understand it. We never said it was news, we just said, "We're

going to tell you the story." And we did, including all the trouble.

Riess: You were saying that the reason for doing the promotions--the end result is what?

Newhall: Naked animals, Anguilla, Fat Venuses, camel races, Persian lambs, all that stuff is a way to build attention and readership in the paper. But it has nothing to do with the real thrust of journalism.

No paper can be a force for good or bad if it has no readers, if it has no currency, if it is not read and appreciated and heard. By some of these offbeat techniques the Chronicle was able to attract the attention of not only some sophisticated readers--who were not always necessarily totally in a laudatory frame of mind--but also a lot of credulous, regular, average people.

I suppose every editor if he's worth anything has to have some kind of a mission. Every editor is a messiah no matter what they say. Some messiahs want you to follow their path and other messiahs--it's closer to my own attitude--simply set up a situation so the readers or the people can make up their minds or discover for themselves that there is more than one answer to everything, that's all. It's a little bit of spinoff from the University of California philosophy department.

IX THE CHRONICLE AND THE COMMUNITY

Newhall: The morale at the paper was great after the first couple of years. It was very difficult to get away from the old sort of Paul Smith golden age, but pretty soon people began having a good time because we had a lot of fun. We had parties all the time for different people and editors and things. When we passed the Examiner--. Years before I had promised the staff the biggest champagne party in history. We had a huge champagne party. (Despite the party we were able to publish the next day's paper.) I said, "Is there anything you want? What can I do for all of you?"

They were complaining about the men's room being a mess, they had an old-fashioned trough for the wash basins in there and stuff. So we had gold-plated swans and dolphins put on all the spouts. That seemed to make everybody happy. [laughter]

The Police Department

Riess: Perhaps a subject to tackle would be the paper's responsibility to the San Francisco political scene.

Newhall: Well, perhaps we can set the stage for this area of the Chronicle's involvement in political and social environmental action in San Francisco. The stage on which I appeared, the San Francisco newspaper stage, was one in which the city politically, morally, socially, was basically dominated by the Examiner. The good old Ex owned, body and soul, the police department and the mayor's office. Now you cannot begin to exercise your own influence and power until you either liberate the mayor and the police department, or take control of them.

So my absolute, and I knew at the time, first responsibility in terms of San Francisco newspapering was to knock off the Examiner's influence and control of the mechanics of government. And it was not only the police department, all the different divisions, the

commissions and so on. It was so bad that the Chronicle couldn't even cover a crime story and beat the Examiner at it because the Examiner--Bill Wren was the managing editor then--had such a line into the police department and the mayor's office that the cops on the beat handling a crime story would often phone the Examiner. Under those circumstances the Ex would have the story before our Chronicle people could even get on the scene. It was a tremendous imbalance.

To set about correcting that imbalance so that one could destroy the power of the Examiner or whatever, we had to elect our own mayor, or at least provide the city with a free mayor, a reasonably independent and honest mayor. And through that we could straighten out the police department. I felt that we had to supplant the Examiner as the basic Number One influence on the political life, social life of San Francisco. Now that's where it began.

Riess: These power bases that the Examiner had, had to do with old Irish Catholic ties, or what?

Newhall: Partially they were into the archbishop's office. I'm not a Catholic at all myself, but you hear me talk quite a bit about the church one way or another. You know when we sent Bud Boyd into the bush we got a priest--we wanted an honest witness to watch Bud going into the wilderness and so on. (After all the Examiner's "hoax" rumpus I think the priest may have been as a matter of fact defrocked or burned at the stake by the Holy See because he went along on this.)

There's a great Irish Catholic influence historically in San Francisco, and it's not particularly bad or good, you know, it's just there. Although the owners of the Chronicle, the deYoung family, are good practicing Catholics and very active in this, the Hearsts--they were just sort of atheists, or agnostics or apostates, god knows what. But the Chronicle, the deYoung family, never played along with or seemed to take any orders from the archbishop's office. They figured, I think, the archbishop was working for them, they weren't working for him.

Riess: Well, what is it that makes for this old boy network between the Examiner and the police department?

Newhall: I think most of the Examiner readers were probably Catholics and Hearst was playing along to that.

Riess: So it is that.

Newhall: Oh yes, I think it's just--you can't really get that into a computer exactly, but you see the "decency," the "respectability" I have been talking about, it all comes from that middle class, blue

collar, lunch box Catholic morality. The Protestant moralities, they've got their problems, too.

Riess: Who was the Chronicle's first candidate then?

Newhall: Well, all right, the first thing that I--forgive me for saying "I" all the time, but anyway I had basically all the responsibility for the whole editorial thing, let alone any other part of the paper--the first thing, step by step, was to bust up the police department's chummy relationship with the Examiner. Forget the mayor for a moment. So I got Charlie Raudebaugh, who had been an old Examiner man, to do a series of stories on the Blue Gang, which is what the old police department was called. The Blue Gang was basically run by Irishmen and so on, and was supporting the Examiner. Raudebaugh did a series of stories and it started a turmoil.

The whole point of it was that the San Francisco police officers were on the take, uneducated, and so on and so forth. They were in great part a bunch of convivial tosspots, sort of. He started his police series of stories with the old story--it's apocryphal I guess, been used everywhere--of the San Francisco cop who found a dead horse at the corner of Guerrero and 14th Street and he had to drag the animal up the block to Church Street because he didn't know how to spell "Guerrero." It went from there downhill all the way. About how the San Francisco cops were amiable boozers. I don't know, you'd have to read it. I can't even remember it all, but it was very effective.

The Mayor's Office, George Christopher

Newhall: Then Charlie and I talked it over and I said, "Charlie, we've got to get a mayor." Elmer Robinson had been mayor of San Francisco for a long time. He was a Mason--there's a strong Masonic strain, too, in San Francisco. Elmer was involved to a certain extent with the Woodlawn Cemetery--although that's supposedly non-sectarian, it's sort of Masonic in spirit--along with Leo Halley, who was one of the old boy supervisors.

We knew George Christopher, a popular supervisor, was going to run. I said, "Look, we've got to be first, we've got to endorse a good man. He's got to be honest, he's got to play it down the middle. We can't ask him just to work for us. That's no way to go. If we let him be honest then he's going to work for us, because honest people work for us. They don't work for the Examiner."

Charlie agreed, and this was about eighteen months before the election. This was early. So we got George to come in and talk

about it. All we pitched him was, "Look George, we're going to go for you, we're going to really get you in there. We think you're going to win anyway. The only thing we want to know is, will you be absolutely independent when you're in the mayor's office, and not favor anybody?" And this was a fact. You couldn't say, "Look, we want you to be our boy." That would be up to him to decide. But anyway, he said, "Sure, that's fine with me." And we came out and really pushed him when it came time to endorse.

And as far as I'm concerned, I think George was the greatest mayor this city's ever had, I really do. He was down the other day at a little dedication in the southern part of the state that I had to preside at. He had to speak along with some others. He got up and for some reason or other he began talking about San Francisco and the Chronicle. It had nothing to do with the affair that we were attending.

He said, "I want to tell you something about that city." He said, "The first day I was in the office the police chief appeared in my office. He said, 'Now, Mr. Mayor, where do you want me to bring the envelope?' And I said, 'What envelope?' And he said, 'Well, the envelope with the money in it.'" (This is George Christopher speaking.) It had been the practice in San Francisco in the old days, the bag man would come in with the money from off the beats, or people who wanted favors, this, that, and the other.

George said, "I told him to get out of my office and never to come back, and I changed the police chief, and there's never been anything like that while I was in the office." Now he had no reason to say all this at this southern California occasion of which I'm speaking a year ago. But I believe him totally. People have their friends and so on, but he was an honest man.

Anyway, George did become mayor, and from then on after the police had been shaken up by George, more people and politicians began coming to the Chronicle to discuss what problems they may have had, and fewer to the Examiner, because the Examiner began changing their publishers and their editors. They were in so much trouble.

Environmental Advocacy

Newhall: The Chronicle then, from that point, participated in or led the way in some of the environmental planning or decisions or fights that went on. After we published a series of interesting and controversial episodes about the California water plan, the freeways, the state withholding tax, we managed to get into the pants, in a sense, of the governor. The Governor was Pat Brown after a while. Goodie Knight was governor at first, I think, in

'53. He had taken over when Earl Warren had gone on to the Supreme Court.

At the Chronicle we were so early on in this business of the environment that I sort of sit and shake my head over these kids today who figure, gee, they're the first ones on board that know what a precious environment we have, and so on and so forth. We really, I think, did plow, at least in terms of newspapering and journalism, some pretty early trails along the road to a better environment.

Riess: Yes, you had very good environmental writers, too: Michael Harris, Dale Champion, Harold Gilliam.

Newhall: BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit] was another big one, too.

Yes, Dale Champion, Michael Harris, Allan Temko, some of the stories they did were magnificent! Temko alone made the Catholics redesign and redo their new cathedral here in town. It was a horrible thing they had originally designed. And building the bridge down in the South Bay--.

Riess: You consider the architecture to be the environment, I take it? When I'm talking about the environment I think of things like bay fill and so on. You're talking about the visual environment.

Newhall: It's all part of the same. Oh lord, yes.

Riess: These people that I mentioned, Michael Harris, Dale Champion, Harold Gilliam, did they start out being environmental writers?

Newhall: I think it all developed. Harold Gilliam had come to work on This World, I think, writing news stories. On his own then he went out and began doing stories on places, you know, nature stories on Tomales Bay, or here and there. He just had this affinity for it. He began doing more and more reporting like this and would get his stuff published with us or in magazines, or finally in books I believe. Harold plowed his own field there, and he did beautifully.

Riess: Would you say that one of your strengths was allowing people to plow their own fields?

Newhall: Certainly, I tried to find people who had these many, many gifts. And they were marvelous people. I would try to channel them. As I say, I would try to get somebody to write about the environment or about the freeways or about the water plan or about BART, because this was all so exciting to San Francisco. And also about topless bars and about crime, about prostitution, you name it. It's all part of the city.

Chronicle Writers

The Editor's Job

Riess: You said somewhere that the important thing is that people "write beautifully," and I've got that in quotes. How did you get them to write "beautifully?"

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Newhall: Well, the whole role of an editor--and I think you'll think I'm going around the barn on this--an editor is a vastly misunderstood animal--he is, or he should be, an unsung hero. In the Sunday news magazine This World my title and function was editor. You have a number of guys and women, during the war particularly, writing. The successful editor, the sensible, sensitive, successful editor, is the editor who can take anybody's copy and process it with their knowledge and understanding--that's necessary--so that the end product expresses even better what they were trying to say. And a day later they will be convinced that they have written every word of it and it hasn't been touched.

Now this is a challenge for any editor. You take some of these people who are sensitive or prima donnas, you might call them, and a lot of them don't like to be edited. When you can have them come back for more and they feel that everything they've written has come from their own pen, which it has spiritually, but you've perhaps sharpened it a little here or done this or that--.

Editing is not simply a business of cutting up a story or tramping on it. What I call editing is the process of stimulating or otherwise encouraging your writers--who are already great, in this case--to write their greatest, that's all. The editor never gets the by-lines, he never gets any glory, he sits there. But all these wonderful people produce. And after a while they're all in their own mold and you don't even bother to look at their copy.

Like Herb Caen, he isn't edited really, in terms of actual slicing here and there. I'd try to persuade him to recast or amend some items. The idea of editing any successful publication is to develop writers who can produce, who do not need editing or who do not need discipline. But I've always tried to encourage them, to excite them.

Training New Journalists

Riess: Did you hire a lot of people right out of journalism school?

Newhall: Very seldom. None for ten or fifteen years, because we didn't have the time or the money to put into them, to develop them.

Riess: It's like architecture school or other professional schools, you come out of journalism school and you need to learn to write?

Newhall: There are at least two answers to this question. In this little paper I have in the south, for example, we cannot pay decent salaries. And so there's a tendency to get people out of journalism school. But it takes you six months or a year to knock the journalism--now I don't want to be nasty about it, because I don't mean it that way--but kids learn a certain routine in a journalism school, and there are some practical aspects of living that are not necessarily as they appear in the books. You know, the students learn a certain writing style, so it's tough for us down there. And it takes about six months or a year before you decide whether or not they can make it, and then by that time the cub reporters have learned enough so they go somewhere else for twice the salary. Time after time after time. I'm speaking now of a small paper.

The Chronicle, we had just very little money to spread around. I'm not defending this as being a good approach, but I felt we did not have time or money to put much energy into training anybody or developing anyone. We had to take people who were more skillful and who could respond more quickly to the challenge of it all.

Riess: So did you end up hiring people away from other papers?

Some of the Best

Newhall: Oh yes, Michael Grieg we got from the Examiner. Warren Hinckle, I got him from the Foghorn out there at the University of San Francisco. He was a good writer. He despised the Chronicle, he held us in the greatest contempt when he was, you know, plugging away there on the Foghorn, but he came around. He's a bigger and better freebooter than the lot of us now. He's the best, but he does need an editor. And then we have some of our copy boys who have come along.

I tried to hire Tom Wolfe to do something for the Chronicle, but he was riding high on his way already. I tried to hire Jessica Mitford, I tried to get her to write sports for us, but she didn't want to go along with the gag. She's a pretty good writer. I didn't care where they came from or what they thought if I felt that they could indeed write some stories that would have a certain charm and fascination about them.

Riess: Were Dave Perlman and Milt Silverman both science writers when you

got them?

Newhall: Milt was. He had a bad heart. He had been with the Chronicle for quite a while. As a matter of fact I'd gone out with him on a couple of stories, just for the hell of it, because of some of the interesting stuff he was covering. Dave had come to the Chronicle before the war, I believe, straight out of Columbia, along with Bill German. Steve Fisher was a third Chronicle-Columbian. And they developed in the Chronicle. Like Harold Gilliam, I think Dave just sort of went off on his own or got interested in science and was assigned it. You see, sometimes you assign good smart people to a certain beat and they'll either develop it into something, or not. There's no rule for any of this, really, from my point of view.

Riess: What about Jim Benet?

Newhall: Jim was an old schoolmate of mine from the Tamalpais School for Boys. He came to work for us when Paul was there.

Riess: He did education?

Newhall: Was that it? He married Janie Gugel, I know that. Where is he now? He's not working for us now, is he?

Riess: I think he went on into television at the time of the strike.

Newhall: Oh yes. Jim was kind of wandering around, in a sense. He was trying to find, I think, what he really wanted. He had had, oddly enough, a couple of minor political problems, and we had to straighten that out for him. Jim was a good, smart boy. Some of these kids would come to work--I say "kids," I'm sorry--they'd come to work, and some of them were a little doctrinaire. We would try to get them to relax and enjoy it all.

Managing Editors

Riess: You said that somebody who doesn't get much credit was Gordon Pates, the managing editor.

Newhall: Yes, sure, Gordon kept all the animals in line. He got the paper out. He came to us straight out of Washington University and went to work on This World magazine when I was editor of the World. Then he followed me as editor of the World. Then when I became Sunday editor and left that, he became Sunday editor. Then when I got this last job I got him to serve as managing editor.

There was a problem, and I might as well mention it. The Chronicle was owned by the deYoungs, and historically the deYoungs

had enjoyed a comfortable conservative Republican orientation. Well, among all the bright young men on the Chronicle were a lot of guys who had gone along with the Popular Front, a kind of left wing phase, and who were really pretty liberal. They were wired in with the longshoremen and that whole liberal scene in San Francisco.

When I had the responsibility for the paper as a whole, more or less, I had to somehow try to build up a staff of people who were apolitical or at least who were not dedicated along one line or another in terms of politics or ideological thought. I was interested in good reporters, not "conservatives" or "liberals." And I did have a problem with--possibly my closest personal friend on the paper was Larry Fanning, who had been managing editor. We had been very close and very supportive and so on. But Larry was constantly, I think, sometimes confusing doctrine with journalism. It was just an upsetting kind of factor, and I finally had to part with him. It was a very painful thing. He went on to the Chicago Sun-Times and we continued our personal friendship, but it was difficult. That was when I put Gordon Pates in as managing editor to replace him, because Gordon didn't care what any reporter was like, just as long as he could be as accurate as possible about his coverage. You know. Dogma did not fit in with Gordon.

Japanese-American Relocation##

[Interview 6: April 18, 1988]

Newhall: You were asking about the days when the Japanese-Americans here in the West Coast were relocated. We were speaking of restitution for Japanese who were interned. The old people certainly should receive restitution, because so much of their property was either sold at fire sale prices or simply deteriorated. And here was a vast, vast miscarriage of American justice in that thing. I went and visited a couple of the relocation camps during the war. See, a lot of my friends were up there.

Riess: How had they come to be your friends?

Newhall: Oh, from Cal and around. But why I did it is because it was so unjust and so improper at the time, and believe me I knew it. It was obviously a violation of the whole American constitutional system. You know, there were an awful lot of people who were hurt --there's this oversimplification of everything. They say, gee, the American people--the white American people--wanted the Japanese to go into camps. Well, maybe they did. They also wanted the Germans and Italians put in camps, but it's pretty hard to separate the Germans and Italians out from the rest of us mongrel American caucasians. This Japanese relocation was just a local thing on the

West Coast, the Western Sea Frontier, whatever you call it.

It was General deWitt who ordered it. I went to see him and I went to see the FBI. I asked the FBI, "Why are you locking these people up?" They said, "Well, the army says we've got to." I said, "Okay, I've one question. Is there anybody, does the FBI have a problem with any human being of Japanese ancestry, anyone of them of whom you have any doubts, any known sabotage, any question?"

"No, we're not involved in this," he said. "Anybody who we have any worry about is either under surveillance or has been taken care of long ago." So the whole thing was a put-on. It was obvious then, but nobody had the guts to come out and acknowledge it, particularly Franklin Roosevelt. There's the man who was responsible for allowing it to happen.

Riess: Were you reporting on this for the paper?

Newhall: Oh, sort of. I wrote a couple of pieces, but I just felt very badly about it.

Riess: Do you think that your pieces brought it more to the attention of people? Was there a response to the pieces?

Newhall: Oh, no, nobody cared.

But you'd go up there to one of these camps on the backside of the Sierra Nevada mountains and you'd see all these people's automobiles rusting outside. They lost their cars, they lost their homes. It was terrible. I don't know, I just feel so badly that now it's sort of simplified down to, well, the Japanese and Japanese-Americans were put in there and everybody else was willing to allow it. This was a military, Army decision. And Roosevelt went along with it, and he never should have, he had no reason to do it. I don't know why I'm waxing so--. In the Hawaiian Islands they couldn't lock up the Issei and Nisei because they'd have to lock up most of the people in the Islands. It was terrible.

I can never forget it and nobody should ever be able to excuse it. The Japanese-Americans have every right to feel as bitter as they do. There were a couple of suits by Japanese-Americans who had suffered this indignity. One girl back in Montana or somewhere, the day after V-J Day, the court decided the detention was indeed unconstitutional. Well, it was unconstitutional from Day One, not just starting with V-J Day.

This had, I think, more to do with my basically cynical attitude toward our democratic government than anything else that ever happened. This was a total violation of the American "dream," or anything else you want to call it. It was improper, it was terrible, and I have no respect, basically, for our government

decisions that have been made since that day.

Riess: Well, that's worth saying something about. Were you a voice crying in the wilderness?

Newhall: I suppose so. But I couldn't cry out enough. I was then editor of the World and very shortly thereafter I went over to England.

What started me on it was a story that appeared in the Chronicle. Why I felt so sensitive about it was that among my closest friends from Cal were the Obata family. He [Chiuro Obata] was a professor in the art department. His son Kimio was in my class along with Bud Neuhaus--of German descent. And then Mine Okubo was also in the art department. She had won an art scholarship to Europe and came rushing back when we went to war--just in time to be shipped off to camp.

An article appeared in the Chronicle, over which I had no say. (As I say, I was then editor of the Sunday news magazine, This World.) This article was about how the Japanese-Americans, whether or not they were citizens, whether or not they were Nisei, were all here because the Emperor of Japan had decreed that the Japanese emigrants who went to this country should reproduce and develop American citizens in this country. Presumably these new Americans of Japanese ancestry would have sentiments emotionally tied in with Imperial Japan and that they could function as a kind of fifth column in time of war.

This bunkum was an old myth put about by the McClatchy papers, really, in Sacramento. The McClatchy papers at that time were not quite as prominent as they are now. But they did represent a voice of the California farmer, particularly in the Central Valley, where there had been historic Oriental prejudice because of the competition between the immigrating Oriental farmers and the older more established Anglo farmers. The older middle western Central Valley farmers were bitterly disposed toward the prosperity that the Oriental farm families were achieving because of their work ethic.

I can't say much more than that about it, but this enraged me. I talked to Bill Chandler who was then the managing editor. He had ordered me to put this story into This World. I went up to Bill and said, "Hey, what are we running this story for?" He said, "Well, you know," or something like that. I don't know exactly what he told me, but I was still so dissatisfied I went down and talked to Chester Rowell, who still had the title of editor of the Chronicle, though he sat in a little office on the second floor. This would have to be in early 1942. Rowell understood, and he talked about the problem with McClatchy and the rural attitudes and this, that, and the other.

I said, "Well, I just have to go on record with this that I

think it's outrageous, it's un-American," and so on and so forth. I was really upset, because it was wrong. I don't usually use the word "wrong," but this was wrong.

So then I began talking to the army and the FBI and I went out and visited the Tule Lake and Manzanar camps for about a week in each place and hung around. You know, they call them now "internment camps" or "concentration camps" or something. These camps were, in point of fact, perfectly decent. They were run by mostly Indian service people; it was a very paternal, kind of benevolent thing. But the indignity of families being locked up in almost cardboard encampments, cardboard quonset huts, something like that! I wrote a story about that tour.

A lot of people don't realize it, but the security forces, the camp police, were mobilized from the inmates--if you want to call them inmates--the Japanese-Americans. In Manzanar the security was basically totally lax. Nobody really cared, but these poor people had nowhere to go. See, these camps were basically right up against the east side of the Sierra. Some young man would go over the fence and head for the mountains. Maybe they wanted to go home or something. Nobody ever bothered to chase them or report them that I know of. The superintendent simply said, "They'll be back in a week or two. They're going to get cold up there camping alongside the stream and they'll come back." And they did.

Riess: So you went really as an observer out of your own interest, but you wrote a few stories about it?

Newhall: Yes, just an account. It really struck me how American everyone really was, and it seemed so pitiful. I think very shortly thereafter I went off to the war, so-called. But I will never forget it. I talked to all the army PR guys and the FBI and the police. It was so unnecessary and it came right down to two personalities, as far as I could see. One was General John deWitt, who was the commanding officer of what used to be the Ninth Army Corps. John L. deWitt, I think it was. And Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The fact that Roosevelt would allow this to take place--you see, I had a great respect for him, although I think I never voted for him--the fact that he would allow this to take place horrified me, because this was not constitutional. I don't care what any stupid lower court or judge said at the time. I'm sure anybody can see and appreciate this now. But then it was a very different world.

Anyway, I'm sorry I got into that.

The University of California at Berkeley Beat

Riess: Ruth had the Berkeley beat. Did she pick up on the Free Speech Movement, or were there other reporters covering Berkeley in the early sixties?

Newhall: By the sixties when the Free Speech Movement came along, she had left the paper and was no longer reporting. She was there during the Loyalty Oath, around 1950, in the McCarthy era, which was quite an important thing.

Riess: In the fifties, there was really probably nothing to cover in terms of movements.

Newhall: There was the regular police beat and all that. But there was a lot to cover in Berkeley in the 1950s scientifically, with the Radiation Lab and the development of nuclear investigation and nuclear development up at the Cyclotron, all that stuff. That was the big story out of Berkeley then, the science.

Riess: And there were science reporters.

Newhall: Oh yes, but Ruth would be on top of it, really. We used to entertain them, Seaborg and that handsome young man who came up with the dinosaur extinction theory recently.

Riess: Alvarez.

Newhall: Yes, Luis Alvarez. See, they all lived near us. All our kids were in nursery school together. So she was pretty much posted on a lot of that stuff. In some respects I think the coverage of a lot of things in Berkeley--this is previous to the collapse of Berkeley as a social and cultural institution--the coverage was very good in the Chronicle. I would hardly bother to cover it anymore.

Ruth had access to so many of the faculty members--not so many, but a few. She knew them well and they had mutual confidence. She could cover it pretty easily, you know, it's not like hiring some little kid to come in and start off as an intern over there, saying, "Where's Wheeler Hall?" or "Where's Sather Gate?"

Riess: Where did she write from? Home?

Newhall: Oh no, no, there was a press room down at the Berkeley police station. You float around. You come into your desk, you read the papers, you see somebody or you hear something or get a tip, or somebody in the paper over in San Francisco gets a lead and they say, "Hey, what about this?" or something. You see, the news has to originate somewhere. She knew old Dr. Birge, Professor [Raymond T.] Birge and "Earthquake Andy" Lawson. It was a regular sort of beat,

just to drop around and say hello. And these guys are hustling their stories, too, you'd better believe it.

Riess: You mean the University's information office?

Newhall: Professors. Most of them are not shrinking violets.

Charles Camp, he was one of the greatest guys they ever had at the University. He was a very close personal friend of ours. He's the paleontologist, used to come up with the bones of one or another ape man here and there or Ichthyosaur. We used to go out digging with him in the desert.

If you have a good beat reporter he is probably going to know as much about some new development as the University press office is, and probably earlier. Now I can't describe how, it's just the nature of the animal. Let's take Dave Perlman. I cannot give you chapter and verse on this, but he would have, I'm sure, a very good personal working relationship with all the key people at the University in the area of the sciences and so on, and they would see each other at parties or occasions, functions, happenings, whatever you call it. He'll say, "Well, how are you coming with this work on the--" such-and-such a virus or something like that. And there's a good chance that he may get what some people would call a leak, say, or an early discussion on the matter, and will be after it. It can develop from there in a number of different ways.

Free Speech Debate

Riess: When did you and Ruth and the Chronicle get the first inkling of student unrest?

Newhall: Well, if there's unrest you're going to hear about it pretty fast, aren't you, from the police?

Riess: From the police?

Newhall: Well, if there's any serious unrest, yes. But there's always been unrest at Berkeley. You want to get into the student unrest or Free Speech Movement? Let me say this, because maybe it will help straighten it out. The Free Speech Movement was only a stranger, more active example or episode of student turmoil than there had been for the last few decades. But to me it was always very unimportant and just a nuisance and was bad for the University. I don't consider it a major factor in the sociological development of the educational system on the West Coast.

But we did have to cover all these people running around along

Telegraph Avenue there. Then it turned into the so-called Filthy Speech Movement, which was I thought a bore. I don't know how to sort it all out. This was the sixties.

Riess: You don't think that that was an important step in students gaining power?

Newhall: What student power? What power have the students ever really had? I don't want to get into too sharp a debate about this.

Riess: Mob power.

Newhall: Yes, to a certain extent. But the only thing I think of where they had really true power is in a negative kind of way, and a very tragic way. I think the killings at Kent State finally did attract the attention of the great middle class to the fact that, "My goodness, there is something wrong here." But a student rumpus in Berkeley--I may be getting around and off the side--the student rumpus in Berkeley on the streets of Telegraph Avenue or at Sather Gate is pretty much just a nuisance to most of the public. I do not consider it as being a very powerful thing.

Riess: Well, if it brings out the police and tear gas and the National Guard--

Newhall: Well, that's because the police aren't very smart sometimes.

Riess: But there do seem to be power issues once you get guns out.

Newhall: Well, is a disturbance of the peace a power issue?

Riess: This is really a kind of cuckoo discussion because I'm here to find out from you.

Newhall: No, but honestly, I'm trying to answer you. As an editor I did not consider generally--I wouldn't cover the student demonstrations, protests, whatever you want to call it, as anything more than a demonstration or a protest, and maybe try to find out what these kids are talking about, you know, as you would a riot at Giant Stadium because the Giants lost a game or something. Now I'm exaggerating, honestly. I'm sure that to anyone who was in Berkeley, those were great days of important turmoil--that it all mattered and went somewhere. But where did it go?

Riess: Did the seriousness of all this take you by surprise?

Newhall: See, now there's where we depart. You come in with the premise that it was serious.

Riess: Ultimately it became serious.

Newhall: In what way?--except at Kent State.

Riess: Gosh.

Newhall: I know, this is shocking to you, I'm sure.

Riess: I know, it is shocking to me, because I remember helicopters overhead and people running in the streets and headlines every day.

Newhall: Were there headlines every day? I really have no recollection of it. Oh, I know we covered it. We had a lot of pictures. There was tear gas. I had to lay a suit on the chief of police of Oakland for using mace, because it hit some of our photographers at one time. But I don't think that was a student uprising.

I'm not being very sensible or reasonable on it perhaps. It was certainly serious in that the Berkeley manifestations would have been one among many public protests against the government policy. And it probably came along--when did it start in your recollection? I really don't remember. Early sixties?

Riess: Well, the Free Speech was 1964. I came here in the fifties from a campus where nobody did anything. So it is true that I was just absolutely wowed by such a live community as Berkeley was then.

Newhall: Yes. Well now, you must remember, I was in Berkeley from about '32 to '36 or '37 on the campus. And there were student protest meetings every day down at Sather Gate, screaming about something. So this was more of the same, but perhaps on a somewhat more lush level.

I think it was just fine that they protested. But I think I mentioned earlier, from my point of view as a newspaper editor, I was in complete sympathy with what these people said they were trying to achieve, what they were after, but I considered them more or less a nuisance in an attempt to trying to achieve the reforms which they said they wanted. Every time you get a student protest you have more problems in Congress with the right-wing congressman from the Middle West, or out here in Orange County or somewhere. So you take a step backwards, almost, because the wrong people are protesting for the right thing. Now do you follow what I'm trying to say there?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: And it's still the case. The minute the guys with all the beards and everything else get out protesting something, now I know we're going to have--. And I'm usually totally in sympathy with them, what they want. But that's not always the best way to achieve it. And I do not think-well, I don't know. I can't say much more.

I'm not trying to sound too cool or too surgical about the whole thing, too clinical, but I think some of the--. See, you have a Free Speech Movement, swell. Let me try to describe it this way. That's a fine thing. People can understand that. You need free speech in any decent, reasonable, democratic society of popular government. I've fought for free speech all my life. But when that turns into a dirty speech movement in which they're down there protesting and sitting in the steps crying out, "Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you," all day long, it vitiates I think the power of what it is they are trying to achieve. Now I don't know if you follow me on that, but it's a problem.

Riess: Yes, I certainly can follow that.

Newhall: Because the great number of people among whom the Chronicle is circulating are immediately turned off when you get obscenity rather than a rather serious demand for the rights of young people, students, or the citizen to speak up and protest the government program.

Riess: So you would write an editorial to that effect.

Newhall: I can't remember, I can't remember. We probably normally would have written an editorial, certainly, and I probably could find them, saying, "These students are correct. Now let's get with it, let's pay attention."

Vietnam 1964

Newhall: I think most of this comes from Vietnam. Vietnam didn't really get underway until about '64. When did the Free Speech Movement get going?

Riess: In September 1964. Johnson sent troops in 1965 to Vietnam.

Newhall: Yes, okay, Vietnam, that's what we're talking about really. And this is the student manifestation of the antagonism toward the Vietnam War. And there were lots of other people who were unfriendly to it, but the student protest and demonstrations did underline it, there's no question about it. The Chronicle, I promise you, was against Vietnam. As far as I was concerned, I sort of had it out with Charlie on that subject, and the Chronicle was against it from 1964 on. In '63 Kennedy was killed [Nov. 22, 1963], so it was about '63 that the Chronicle got on it, because I remember--when did these Buddhist monks burn themselves up in public down there in Saigon do you remember?

Riess: No. Gosh, I remember that picture.

Newhall: Okay. Well now, any human being who has any sensitivity whatsoever, he would open the paper and see this poor, young, underfed Buddhist monk burning himself--you say to yourself, "There's something wrong"--which I did say. Well, I know at that time, it was probably '62 or '63, that's when it got bad. This was in the era right after the French had got out. And this was kind of a big fight between the Buddhist native culture and this overlay of Roman Catholicism, which is very strong in Vietnam. I don't know how much you follow Vietnam. And so you take a look at that and you figure something's wrong.

I remember turning to Ruth, and I can't remember if at that moment she was working on the Chronicle or not. I said "Look, will you do me a favor? Will you go back over the history of Indochina? And let's get this straight." When was Diem assassinated? [Nov. 1, 1963.] That was under Kennedy. So that would have been about '63. It was all terrible there. This is where it was all going.

Ruth went through pretty much the whole history of Indochina and we just came out with a total concept that this was a rotten thing that the United States was on, that we were playing along with the Archbishop or with that outfit in Rome, the Vatican, to a certain extent. And we'd have to do something to try to calm it down. Because, again, when people are burning themselves in protest and so on and so forth, there's something wrong.

It was obvious that this Vietnam thing was no good and inevitably it was going to damage our country. This more or less prevailed in terms of our editorial attitude. Certainly it influenced our news coverage of Southeast Asia.

By the way, on the subject of the Chronicle's attitude toward and coverage of Vietnam--I don't think I have mentioned that in a kind of final attempt to provide some fair coverage of the Vietnam mess we sent Felix Greene over to put together some stories out of North Vietnam--from Hanoi. I don't know whether or not you remember Felix, but he was an old time supposedly left-leaning journalist. A little flaky maybe but a well-known liberal. He was a brother of Graham Greene, the widely admired novelist. Well, Felix did indeed get us some stuff out of Hanoi, although this was considered taboo by my old friends of the establishment crowd. And I was very pleased we could do this. I cannot recall exactly when this was, but I imagine it was during the days when Jane Fonda was having such a hard time because of her ties with North Vietnam.

I've got off the students a little bit, but then the students came along and the whole country caught fire. And they did! It was very important, the part the students did play as a group, as again culminating in this horrible Kent State thing [May 4, 1970]. The country caught fire and then we went through these horrible years of Vietnam and Johnson and then Nixon.

Covering the Free Spirits

Riess: Then how about the hippies in San Francisco?

Newhall: Well, that's a slightly different story from the student protests. Even I will give the student protests a few marks above that. We went along with it.

Riess: But how that was all reported, the Haight-Ashbury, and "love-ins" and so on, must have been influenced by the Chronicle's attitude.

Newhall: The hippies I think we covered in pretty much an objective, almost affectionate or permissive way. Certainly my own attitude and involvement in this--I've always been one to rebel, or not rebel, to examine the establishment, the current mode of thought--I thought this country needed a good shaking up.

Then you get the next phase, the homosexual revolution or whatever you want to call it. San Francisco has been a little bit in the forefront of all this, the hippies and AIDS and all these things. I don't know what response you're looking for, what you want me to say now, what you want me to discuss.

Riess: I am interested in the role taken by the daily paper in a city where so many trend stories break.

Newhall: A lot of these stories break in San Francisco because--again, I think we discussed it earlier--traditionally San Francisco has been a very wide-open, permissive city. So many of these--if you want to call them free souls or kooks or whatever you want to call them--come out here because they can express themselves, and find a lot of fellow free souls or freaky friends. In all of history, San Francisco has been one of the greatest free rides that has incorporated itself as a city.

Editorially, I have always felt that everyone should be free to express himself without any particular restraint as long as he doesn't bother the neighbors. Or, as they say, you can do it in the streets as long as you don't frighten the horses.

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Newhall: Well, after a while all the free souls came out here and they were given so much free rein that things got a little out of hand, to the point of boredom. I'm not sure that all this early San Francisco permissiveness and the freedom of the American youth or the American people from the shackles of traditions has all been to the good. But I've always respected anyone's idea to express himself in any way he wishes so long as it does not seem so unbalanced as to be a danger to so-called Society with a capital S.

"Mirroring" Society

Riess: You just reported it, you weren't making judgments about it.

Newhall: Not really. I didn't want to be antagonistic, or unsympathetic, because so many people I knew were involved in it, and I thought they had a right to their soap box, just as Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon after him had a right to their soap box.

Riess: I think you were quoted, maybe in the Berkeley Barb, as saying, "The Chronicle's policy is to keep the establishment anesthetized so they won't feel the pain as we stick in the needle and give them a transfusion." But a lot of people would say that you were the establishment.

Newhall: Well, I know it, but the people who say we were the establishment are not very sophisticated.

Riess: So you were the enlightened opposition.

Newhall: Well again, we weren't shooting for--I don't know, if you're going to divide our society into sort of two camps, we weren't shooting for either one. We were trying to establish an environment in which both could operate and put forth their own arguments, their own sentiments. We were, after all, a newspaper. I've been speaking very much in a sense today of being a partisan, a protagonist and all this. But our function as a newspaper in a sense was to try to mirror what the people, what society, what the establishment or non-establishment are doing.

I just know that all the major metropolitan papers in the United States of America more or less go down the same trail, hand-in-hand--and an example is Vietnam. Don't let any of these high-powered editors do anything except apologize for the way they went along with Vietnam.

I forget how I started this sentence, or what I was going to say, but--oh yes, I feel if all the major newspapers, or most of them, the big, heavy, traditional papers are going along one road, there is something wrong. That was basically the Chronicle's attitude, unspoken, unwritten, unmentioned. And it is one reason why, among these major papers and, in a sense, academic enclaves in schools and so on, the Chronicle has always been considered more or less a maverick, unpredictable and probably untrustworthy--and in the end unworthy. But anyway, that is the genesis of a lot of it.

Riess: San Francisco, you said a few minutes ago, is a maverick community, and the newspaper I guess is mirroring this.

Newhall: That's right, because I love San Francisco, and was brought up in

San Francisco. To me it is still the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. No, well maybe not still, but until ten years ago it was the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. I thought it was a good city, if the word "good" can be used in such a--it was a fair city to its citizens. People had a chance to go about their miserable, personal business without being bothered. Now unfortunately there are all these pressures on from all these traditional establishment groups out here which include labor unions, chamber of commerce, the students, the filthy speech people, the homosexuals, the yuppies, the flower children. You know, they're trying to mold everybody else in San Francisco into their own pattern.

I'm speaking of this now just as if I were functioning on the Chronicle as an editor.

Riess: What do you mean? Rather than what?

Newhall: Well, I don't know. But this was my role as a newspaper editor.

Riess: Yes, but you were true to yourself.

Newhall: Oh yes, sure. I mean, I think so, yes. I tried to be.

The University, a Force for Democracy

Riess: You were a Berkeley Fellow, which is a very fine thing to be.

Newhall: I think so. They made a mistake in granting me that distinction, but anyway, I have always been honored by it. They should have made Ruth a Berkeley Fellow--I tried to tell that to Jim Hart one time--and not me. But anyway.

Riess: Along with some of the other Fellows you spoke at Sather Gate to appeal for an end to violence on May 23, 1969.

Newhall: Yes, I got it going. I felt that the different organisms of the University were hurting their own University. We were discussing this a little earlier. I thought the students were overdoing it, getting out of hand, that they were hurting the University. Whether or not I agreed with them, with these people who were making these rather serious protests or noisy protests, they were holding the University up to either contempt or ridicule, scorn or obloquy or something like that. And that was not good for the University if Cal was going to maintain its position as the premiere, or one of the premiere, intellectual influences in the United States of America.

Riess: So this is a way in which you're a conservative at heart.

Newhall: I guess that's conservative, I don't know.

Riess: Well, holding onto the institutions.

Newhall: Well, I've said earlier, certainly when we were discussing Cal, I owe to the University of California one way or another, generally speaking, my whole intellectual, spiritual attitude toward the world and enjoyment of life. I'm not saying I learned anything, but I absorbed a lot of things there. And to me the University of California, along with some others, including Michigan maybe, and I suppose Harvard, and to a certain extent Yale, you know the crowd, Stanford in kind of a parvenu way--I think the University of California is one of the truly great forces for democracy and for the perpetuation of the concept of the dignity of the individual that functions in the United States.

The San Francisco Bay Guardian

Riess: The Bay Guardian--I read somewhere that it was begun with the support of a wealthy San Francisco heir to a shipping fortune. Who might that have been?

Newhall: Bill Roth, maybe. It sounds like a cliche description of Bill Roth. His mother, you know, was Lurline Matson.

An "heir to a wealthy San Francisco shipping company" can only be one of the Roths or one of the Dollars. I imagine probably it was Bill Roth, but that's totally a guess.

Riess: Bruce Brugmann--did you know him personally before?

Newhall: No.

Riess: I wondered if in some way he was an idealist and an admirable fellow.

Newhall: You'll hear all kinds of things about him.

Riess: From you?

Newhall: No, no. From everybody.

Riess: Well, I'd like to hear things about him from you. Was he someone who under ordinary circumstances you would have embraced?

Newhall: No, he's not bright enough.

[pause]

Newhall: I didn't mean to stop the conversation with that. And I want to be quite fair to Bruce. From my point of view--let me know, did you want me to talk about Bruce a little bit?

Riess: I'd like to hear about the Bay Guardian and Bruce Brugmann.

Newhall: All right. Bruce came out and started the Bay Guardian [1966]. He rattled the tambourine and blew the bugle and sounded the gun for reform and this, that, and the other--for fighting the establishment, the Chronicle and the Examiner and everybody else, "the PG&E and so on are all in bed together," and this stuff. It's the old, old gag that everybody comes up with when they're going to start a San Francisco paper and become the champion of the people.

Brugmann left Minnesota or Wisconsin or wherever it was [University of Nebraska]--I want to be very fair, I have been told that he left there under some kind of a cloud which I think upon examination will not prove to be quite as serious as some people would like it to be.* I forget what it was, cribbing papers or plagiarizing or something, you know, a little deal, not significant. And he came out here and he made this big rumpus, you know, hocus-pocus about setting up his Bay Guardian. And this was going to rattle the cup, blow the whistle and so on, on the rotten establishment in San Francisco.

And the problem with Brugmann is he never put out a very good paper. All the professional newspaper people I've ever talked to or who have talked to me about it--I never paid any attention to the Guardian. I doubt that I read one copy in my life, maybe two. I read where he covered a story I was involved with. Bruce tends to oversimplify things, to look for villains and to set them up like in the shooting gallery. He creates the villains and then he shoots them down, sort of like that. And he did not have the respect of much of any newspaperman--I'm sorry to put this down, but I said I would be frank. So my opinion was he did not have the respect of his peers in San Francisco or California.

It's the one paper in town, I think, that either threw out the

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*"At the University of Nebraska, where he edited the student newspaper during the McCarthy era, Brugmann found himself defending in print several liberal professors under fire from the American Legion and the Farm Bureau as suspected communists. He barely survived several attempts to have him expelled from the university for what he wrote." p. 177, The New Muckrakers, by Leonard Downie, Jr. The New Republic Book Co., Inc. 1976.

Guild or got in a fight with it. He wouldn't in the end allow unionism or didn't pay a union wage. He said, well, gee look, I'm the muckraker here and I shouldn't have to pay my staff as much as anybody else does, and so on. Bruce was suffering from a kind of dichotomy, you know.

All I'm saying in general is, I think it's better to have something like the Bay Guardian, even with Bruce Brugmann in control of it, than not have it. It never bothered me. As I say, I never read the thing.

Riess: Municipalizing PG&E, was that a story that he created?

Newhall: Well, you realize, that story had been raised by every newspaper in San Francisco starting in the twenties. It's probably the oldest story that has ever been covered, I mean really. I think probably the Chronicle tried to blow it down or something at one time, although I may be wrong. But it was widely known. Oh, it's the granddaddy of all reforming cliches, this particular story. And in my term as an editor or a reporter on the Chronicle, no newspaperman ever came to me and said, "Gee, here's a great story, let's do something on it," because it had all been done.

And the city I suppose still continues to buy its power in this sort of strange arrangement, and their water--I don't know, they got the water I guess themselves, but it was the power deal with PG&E. And I notice this all coming up again now. It comes up again and again--every fifteen or twenty years. I don't think any San Franciscan gives a damn where his power or water comes from, as long as it's not coming out of his pocket. Well now, Bruce and his people for example would say, it is coming out of your pocket because they're charging too much for it because of this ungodly and devilish alliance.

Riess: By his raising these questions did he have a positive effect on the news?

Newhall: Well, I guess the question if I could translate it--did the fact that he was publisher possibly improve the quality of coverage of the other papers? Is that what you have in mind?

Riess: Yes, sure, that's a fine question, yes. [laughs]

Newhall: I think so. As I said earlier, I think the city is net ahead having a paper like the Guardian--however, I'm sorry it's not a better paper--in existence. Because I do think a little loud-mouth criticism tends to keep some publishers a tiny bit more honest than they might otherwise be. I have no objection to it at all.

I have serious doubts about good old Bruce's, I don't know, techniques or something. Because he covered one or two stories I've

been involved in, and I think he was very, very unprofessional about it, I really do. Some people have described him as a fake sort of reformer, a fake muckraker. Who's he in it for? The people, the Guardian, or for Bruce Brugmann? I don't know. But he's more complex than just that, too. He's out there to prove something.

Riess: One of his Bay Guardian stories had to do with real estate development in San Francisco, charging that the Chronicle didn't come out strongly against it.

Newhall: When was this?

Riess: In the sixties. Because there was such extensive real estate holding on the part of the Chronicle-Examiner.*

Newhall: I was not aware of it at that time, and I'm astonished. Because if any newspaper ever came out on behalf of keeping some sanity and attractiveness in the environment, including your real estate development and building, not only private housing but public works, it was the Chronicle. I think we had a magnificent record on that. I don't quite understand it.

Riess: Well, that was one of his campaigns apparently.

Newhall: Do you remember what areas were involved? Is it downtown he's talking about? I really am puzzled.

Riess: He also tackled the joint operating agreement and won $500,000 apparently.

Newhall: I don't know why they paid him off. Really, I don't. But I think they figured it was just going to cost too much to keep fighting and fighting and fighting it, so they paid him off, I believe, and then he could keep his paper afloat for a while. Did you want me to speak about that in some greater detail? Because I left about then.

Riess: I thought maybe it was mixed in with Charles Thieriot's having to go to the anti-trust and monopoly subcommittee. Beginning in 1967 the joint operating agreement had to be defended.

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*"In the book (The Ultimate Highrise, which grew out of a Sept. 1971 Bay Guardian "investigative reporting supplement") Brugmann accused much of the rest of the media in the San Francisco area of a conspiracy of silence about the threat he believed developers posed to the traditional city scale and lifestyle of San Francisco. He blamed this on the involvement of several media firms in real estate in the San Francisco Area:...KRON/Chronicle-Examiner have extensive real estate holdings..." p. 180, The New Muckrakers, op cit.

Newhall: I think the joint agreement was executed in 1968. That's correct, but I thought this other one was after I left. I mean, wasn't it in the seventies that he got his payment?*

Riess: I'll check that.

Newhall: I think so. Anyway, there was a lot of antagonism, of course, toward the joint operating agreement. I know I had to appear before some commissioner here in town. I did not get into it later on because Charlie was handling it. I had to appear in one case, but I'm sure they found in our favor that time. There were so many attacks on this score against the joint operating agreement, I honestly cannot separate them out in my mind, in my recollection. I do know that Bruce was the recipient of a settlement which I thought was baronial. On what basis, I don't know, why it was settled that way. I think that for better or for worse the joint operating agreement has somehow withstood the impact of time. And I say, for better or for worse.

Incidentally, on the subject of Mr. Brugmann. On one occasion while he was in full cry after the Chronicle and me in 1969 or early '70, Brugmann came out with a story about I had been picked up by the San Francisco police for being drunk and disorderly or otherwise a vagrant. And one of the local San Francisco radio stations--it might have been KSFO, but I don't think so--picked up the item and put it in a local news program. I think I'm a little fuzzy about this matter because at the time it happened I was in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on board the Eppleton Hall paddling away on our six-month voyage to San Francisco.

But Ruth got mad and wanted to sue. Now you must remember that Brugmann is "libel proof"--that is, he has no money and therefore there's no use trying to squeeze any blood out of this particular newspaper turnip. But the radio station was a more responsible and civiled target. So Ruth had our lawyers bug the station a little bit, and they did want to settle this beef without any serious tumult.

Well, I had perfectly friendly feelings with the radio guys,

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*"Brugmann filed suit against the Chronicle in 1970 and continued to snipe at the SuperChron (as he called the two joint daily newspapers) even after he had settled out of court for $500,000 cash." (San Francisco Magazine, December 1987, p. 95.) "The attention of the nation's journalists began to focus on the expected trial in the summer of 1975...but Brugmann surprised everyone...by settling out of court. For $500,000..." (op cit, p. 181.)

so in the end we made to settle the whole business if they would provide Dolly--my eternal secretary--with a first class round-trip air accommodation and a fancy grand tour of the great cities of Europe.

So, as you can see, Bruce Brugmann actually does spread a little sunshine in the lives of his non-readers.

Riess: The Bay Guardian is still coming out, too.

Newhall: You know, one reason I spoke a little bit acerbicly perhaps about him is, he is also a member of the California Newspaper Publishers Association. And Bruce and I have always got on all right. He feels kind of helpless to really nail me to the wall, because I try to be fleet-footed about some of this stuff. You can call him a gadfly in the CNPA, the California Newspaper Publishers Association, but mostly he's described just as a damn nuisance, because he's almost always sort of "one against the multitude." Perhaps to a greater degree than many of us in this business he always just simply assumes the side of the significant--or insignificant--minority. I don't know, but there is a question of professional respect or integrity involved from time to time. I don't like to say too much about it because it will simply be, I suppose someday, interpreted as my personal antagonism. I don't really react to Bruce at all, one way or another.

Responding to a Critique of the Chronicle

Riess: I should think that the Chronicle presented a very difficult target to him. I've got another quote here that calls the Chronicle the "only above ground underground paper in the United States."*

Newhall: That was Robert Sheer, wasn't it? I think I read it somewhere?

You know, you left this little booklet with me, The Anatomy of Newspapers in San Francisco, by Rivers and Rubin. I thought personally it was very fair and very well done. I have no particular fault to find with it except in the conclusion, which I

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*One Chronicle executive has called it 'the only above ground underground paper in the United States...'" p. 29, A Region's Press: Anatomy of Newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area, by William L. Rivers and David M. Rubin, Institute of Governmental Studies, UC Berkeley, 1971. (Note: The above quote sounds like me! --S.N.)

thought I might mention that I disagreed with rather markedly.

Rivers--in one of these big antitrust cases he either appeared as an expert for the defense or the prosecution, whatever you call it. That was pre-computer days, and somebody needed him with a slide rule to find out how, in arithmetical terms, the different papers had played up the foreign news. He measured and charted the news coverage of various newspapers. I can't remember if he was hired by the Chronicle or by the other side, I really can't. But I thought he did quite a creditable job. And I'm specifically saying this in order to illustrate that I do not feel any particular antagonism or anything else toward him.

This Anatomy of Newspapers book by Rivers and Rubin, I thought generally speaking that they were very fair in their criticism. At least I respected their comments, their observations. I disagreed perhaps quantitatively, but they were fair. Basically it came right down to saying, "The Chronicle is really a successful paper and isn't it too bad?" Now that's about what they said.

When they get to the conclusion of their study they say, "We must await the coming of a publisher whose first purpose is quality, whose vision is sharp enough to recognize it"--they want a new publisher in San Francisco--"and who works for high profits only because they enable him to provide a more significant public service." Well, I can't disagree with a word they say there. But this is pretty obvious stuff.

They said, "Most Bay Area newspapers must take the second step of disentangling themselves from local establishments...this means, of course, that the founding fathers envisioned the press as a check upon government." Well, I tried to say that fifty times, fifty different ways in our discussions here, and I agree completely with what they feel is the problem and the responsibility of publishing a newspaper.

Then they say, "How well does Bay Area journalism perform the task? To answer the question, one need only look at the destruction of the local environment, the pollution of everything from air to human relationships, and the timidity of the press in failing to expose the contaminators." Well, I can only call the attention of anyone who comes after us to go back through the Chronicle and take a look at the record of the Chronicle in terms of the environment, pollutants, architecture, city planning, freeways, the contamination of our whole culture. And I think the Chronicle has really a pretty good record. I agree with them, these are the basic important things.

They say, "Not only is the press the sole knowledgeable adversary to government, but also it is the primary source of

contemporary information," which again is a truism with which I completely agree and have tried to live by.

I'm trying apparently to justify myself. I don't feel any particular need to, but I think these fellows are perfectly smart and reasonable. "It is especially important that the Bay Area press recognize its responsibility," "Speaking truth to power," and so on. Well, that's about all I had to say. I just think that they perhaps gave the Chronicle somewhat lower marks than we deserved in trying to achieve these aims, which are absolutely worthy aims and I think any decent newspaperman will agree with these principles and priorities.

Fighting Pollution and Ugliness

Riess: If you are a check upon government, and a check upon environmental polluters, all you can do as a newspaper is just report it? You can't go any further than that?

Newhall: Well, it depends. We certainly went a lot further. You can report it with a certain flair, or underline it, or to a greater or lesser degree you can call it to the attention of the public. We tried so hard. One of our greatest, if you want to call them promotions or anything else, crusades--and I did not get into ones that they would call good--was the crusade to clean up the Roman Catholic cathedral.

They were going to build this silly, sort of cliche of a church somewhere out there in Franklin and Geary or wherever it is. Allan Temko alone came up with such a powerful blast at it on our front pages that they built I think, if not the best cathedral, certainly one of the greatest architectural institutions here in the city. It is great.

And we did the same thing--these are specifics--with the San Mateo Bay Bridge. The state engineers had planned an old cantilever bridge such as you might find at Carquinez Strait, or early Victorian England, and because of Temko's and the Chronicle's front-page tub-thumping and yelling and screaming, they built quite a nice pre-stressed concrete bridge down there, considering.

Then in the truly great fights we had, one of them of course was with Sacramento. The Chronicle was locked in battle perpetually over the water development, the state water plan, funneling the water south to southern California.

We had a bloody battle with Governor Pat Brown over the state withholding taxes, which is a somewhat more bizarre crusade perhaps, but we lost the battle. I happen to feel terribly strongly that

state income withholding taxes were a drug, just a powerful financial narcotic. The minute the worker's, the employee's pay check is checked off, and the tax prepaid to the state government, the awareness of the community and the burden of taxes lessens to such a degree that the state or federal government can increase their taxes in a painless way politically. I hope that this is clear, what I am trying to say. I felt terribly strongly, I think from the day that Roosevelt put through the withholding tax on a federal level and now California on the state level--under, I believe, Pat Brown--that taxing, and consequently the irresponsible spending of public monies, has got out of hand, and very, very badly. So we fought that.

And then we fought very hard against the state government of Pat Brown on the freeways in San Francisco. And finally as far as I am concerned, the Chronicle almost alone stopped at least a furtherance of the freeway down around the waterfront. We absolutely shot down a freeway through Golden Gate Park.

These are just minor little things, perhaps, but oh, we fought so hard to try to hold back on much of the development down at the foot of Telegraph Hill. In a sense there's been a great deal of development since then in that area, but the buildings are now much lower because of our fighting. It also has been in somewhat better taste than it would have been. We were very instrumental in putting through the forty-foot height limitation along the waterfront, the buildings right on the waterfront.

I don't know how familiar you are with some of these planning procedures, and this is self-serving perhaps, but I'll give you an example of the public and the Chronicle, or the press. At one point, oh, you know, I imagine in the middle sixties or late sixties, the television stations needed a larger transmitting tower. They had planned to put up on the top of Twin Peaks a very large, tall tower. I was very interested in this because I felt it was going to be an eyesore. This huge mind-boggling tower, was going to be a danger. And why put up this huge skeletal tower?

So, and this is typical of the way the Chronicle operated in its environmental crusade, I had them send reporters out to ask the Twin Peaks neighbors up there, "What about this? Do you want a tower here?" We tried to get a couple of "spontaneous" neighborhood groups up there to come out fighting against the tower--you know, it is an old San Francisco custom for two or three or four people to appear on the scene or to march into an editor's office, and claim they represent 500,000 citizens and are speaking for half the world, and so forth. But in the case of the Twin Peaks TV tower, nobody gave a damn up there! And so the big television tower is up there on Twin Peaks today.

Riess: In other words, you encouraged them to organize.

Newhall: I said "Look, you're going to have this tower here!" And we ran a rendering of the tower in the paper. There was nothing clandestine about it. But "Oh, you know." [mimicking bored tone of voice] And these are the people, supposedly the movers and shakers. You know, California Tomorrow or California Now or SPUR, all this crowd. They were disinterested, so what happened? They got the tower there and they've been screaming and shrieking and stamping their feet ever since.

So the good old Chronicle, we sort of operated this way for ten or fifteen years. And I think we achieved some very nice things. A few touristy overdone things have sneaked in. One of them is Pier 39.

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Riess: The other tower that was controversial was the Transamerica Building [1971].

Newhall: The Transamerica Building--by the time the public and these groups of movers and shakers caught up with it, they began to protest the Transamerica Building just because it was tall. A lot of people are suffering under the delusion that "big" is always "bad." There was not a damn thing wrong with the Transamerica Building. But not everyone agreed. So as far as I was concerned, I don't think anybody at the Chronicle ever came out against it much. I don't think Herb Caen likes it yet. But that building is a significant landmark that is of advantage I think both aesthetically and financially to the city. Together with the cable cars and Golden Gate Bridge, it's the single most significant landmark in the city.

Now I just got into that because not all high building is bad and not all low building is good, you know. So if you're going to edit a paper that's going to go after these things you have to establish yourself as some kind of self-anointed Lorenzo de Medici and decide what is good for the people.

Riess: And then if the people aren't thankful enough or are just dreadfully stupid and small-minded about it, then you just become quite cynical after a while.

Newhall: Well, to a certain extent. I am oversimplifying it, but I think I've said right along, it's better to somehow subliminally persuade the public to endorse something with enthusiasm rather than come out and confront them with it at the moment; it's better to get them ready for it. You know, you've got to get a little Spanish fly into their coffee or something if they want to make love. I don't know how else to put it.

Advertisers

Riess: You used promotions as a way of amusing people into awareness.

Newhall: Sure. We had to fight for so many things. Macy's moved into town and the first thing they did was come out and buy up the newspapers, as far as I'm concerned--not the Chronicle, and we lost their advertising for a while on account of Macy's wanted to get rid of the old O'Farrell branch of the California Street Cable Railway Company.

There used to be a cable car system going right down past Macy's from the Russian Hill, Nob Hill area. And these damn fools from New York came out here. Well, they didn't want this rattle trap of old cable car coming up in front of the store. I think it's the best conceivable promotion they could have had. But we fought against it, and the Examiner, of course--this was in early days--the Examiner as part of their approach to San Francisco journalism wanted Macy's advertising more than they wanted the cable cars. I'm oversimplifying it, but the need of advertisements or hunger for advertising was certainly an inducement in their attitude to come out and try to force the mayor to get rid of cable cars and they were successful.

Riess: I didn't realize that advertisers were so sensitive. Did you lose advertisers for your stance on Vietnam?

Newhall: Not really. Not really. You know, an advertiser, if he's a good merchant, he uses his advertising essentially to sell his product. And any merchant who advertises and pays say $100 for an advertisement and doesn't get $101 in net income back is a fool. Because that's why he's buying the space. And in the end it's the dollar that matters. The Chronicle ads, because of the Chronicle's continued progress, began to make a profit for the advertiser.

Oh, we were despised. I think some cases, probably some ads were killed. But it would have been minor. It never bothered me, and Charlie never--it never really came up, because Paul Smith had fought this out.

Just as an aside, it's kind of interesting, at one point when Paul was involved in the Salinas lettuce strike--he was then the young revolutionary in town--Sherman & Clay, the old music store, canceled their advertising in the Chronicle. The Chronicle needed that Sherman & Clay advertising badly. The only edge the Chronicle had, as I recall at that time in San Francisco, in terms of advertising lineage, was that we led in advertising lineage "in shoe stores north of Market Street," and that's all. So when Sherman & Clay called up to cancel, Paul Smith--he's a tougher guy in a sense than I was, and Helen Cameron was in the business at that moment of

negotiating the purchase of about a $15,000 Steinway grand piano, and Paul called up and talked to her, and she canceled her order for the piano. So pretty soon the advertising came back. So, to be sardonic, there is a wonderful, important, significant chapter of San Francisco journalism.

Riess: [laughs] When advertisers chose not to advertise in the Chronicle after the joint operating agreement, would they go ahead and advertise in the Examiner, making some kind of stand, even though it was not to their advantage?

Newhall: Have they tried it? I honestly don't know.

Riess: They could have, couldn't they?

Newhall: Oh, you can go in either paper. See, that was the touchstone, that was the key of all these suits.

Riess: But it was a better deal if you were in both.

Newhall: Right. But one must always realize that the agreement would have been totally invalid and illegal if you had to force any advertising anywhere. That would have been out of the question.

Riess: But people might choose to make this statement.

Newhall: Well, in a practical way you could always cancel one out or not go in the other. But you didn't save yourself much money. So it was pretty much as you say, a statement and nothing else.

A Dianne Feinstein Story

Riess: Did you turn down any class of advertising, any kind of advertising?

Newhall: I hope not. Dianne Feinstein came in once. She pasted up a lot of ads for X-rated theaters in San Francisco. She was then a young, gung-ho supervisor, during about the late '50s or early '60s. And she came in and said, "Do you realize--?" We went into Charlie's office to talk about it. I said, "Oh, let's talk to Mr. Thieriot about this." She said, "Do you realize how dirty these ads are? This is a terrible thing in this city." She pulled out her little packet of paste-up ads and she said, "Now, do you see these ads with the chains around it in the borders instead of regular rules for borders? These chains mean they're homosexual ads. They're vulgar and filthy. See these borders? [The decorated borders around the ads.] This means--" I don't know, maybe they had animals in them, whatever.

Charlie listened to it for a short while and he said, "Well, are you suggesting that we refuse the advertising of these theaters on the ground that they're pornographic or obscene, although the police are not closing them up because they're illegal?" She said, "Well, yes." He said, "Well, we don't agree," and he picked up--it was awful [chuckles]--he picked up her handful of advertising copies she had all pasted up and threw it in the wastepaper basket. He said, "Now, Madame Supervisor, do you have anything else you want to discuss?" Oh, she was really crushed.

I will always applaud Charlie for what he did, but I will say, I felt so bad that I followed her out and I caught her before she left the building. Or I called her at her office. I said, "Look, Dianne, please forgive us. We all have our little styles of rejecting advertising. Please forgive us. We love you and will probably endorse you as long as you breathe."

It was a very informal kind of relationship we had with all these politicians and people.

Riess: Neat to think of you and Charlie working together in quite that way. That's funny. You probably gave him a lot of backbone.

Newhall: I was surprised. Frankly, I was surprised he did it in such a forthright way. I would have talked around it all and said, "Well, you know we'll think about it, Dianne, but you know, homosexuals have their rights." Now believe me, this was before the big, wide-open homosexual rebellion or whatever you want to call it. Because lately there has never been a greater superficial friend of the homosexual community than good old Dianne. This was the girl, you have to remember, who three or four years earlier had been screaming about their ads because they had chains around the pelvis or something.

Riess: In fact you could have used this bit of information about her.

Newhall: Oh, I guess. It would never have occurred to me.

The California Water Plan

Riess: Where did you stand on the California water plan?

Newhall: We were violently opposed to it.

Riess: Why?

Newhall: Because I think northern California water belongs to northern California. See, we were always arguing to break California into

two separate states, Northern California and Southern California. I wanted no part of that kind of Sodom and Gomorrah down there in southern California.

Riess: Even though you had those southern California connections, you didn't feel divided?

Newhall: Well, how could I let any of my personal affairs interfere with my function as an editor of a northern California paper?

Riess: I don't know.

Newhall: That's a rhetorical question. But I had nothing to do with it. And besides that, I think our little family southern California interests had plenty of water. Anybody who starts ranching or farming without a solid basic water right is crazy. I mean, nobody was dying of thirst, unfortunately, in southern California. So why should we send the water that we might need if people decided that San Francisco is what they want. I'm very parochial, believe me. And I still think, as I've said, San Francisco is God's chosen place on earth, although it's being dirtied up at the moment by some of his lesser creatures.

That was a bitter struggle, by the way. And we won it for a while. But then the second or third time around the state legislature voted for it. And the state water bonds were passed. As a last resort we were going to organize--for whatever it's worth, might as well put it in--we were going to organize a people's march on the canal, the canal that carries the water south to Los Angeles, and have everybody in San Francisco empty his bladder into the canal. But for some reason or another we never did quite achieve it. But we still may.

The City's Conscience

Riess: Okay. Speaking of the environmental issues, in 1962 ABAG was formed and various other alphabet groups.

Newhall: Yes.

Riess: Were you directly involved in any of this?

Newhall: You want to know how it worked? I'll tell you. The Chronicle became--after we had straightened out the police department and the mayor's office and elected a few supervisors, we had a fairly significant influence, our own sphere of influence. Now you would have little things, local groups of movers and shakers, that the Chamber of Commerce would put up, like SPUR or ABAG or that stuff.

They would be made up of respectable, public-spirited citizens around San Francisco, for the purpose of either protecting the bay or selling it off to the Crocker Bank or something, I don't know. They'd be there. But as I saw it--I will apologize ahead of time, because I'm trying to tell this succinctly, and again, forgive me if I use the personal first person pronoun, I--.

For a number of years many of San Francisco's decisions and policy decisions were basically, I think, influenced or colored by the Chronicle. The Chronicle's endorsement was really quite significant. And the supervisors, many of them, were very responsive. I kept in touch with all of them on a personal as well as a political or professional basis. It's a small town, like I said. I called up Dianne to say, "Look, I'm sorry about having your trash thrown away," whatever. And there were some complacent supervisors then. They were good, stern, sound San Francisco material from north and south of Mission or Market Street. You didn't get any of these kooks like--I don't know, I don't want to slander anybody, I really don't. But you know, you get poor little Carol Ruth Silver, is that her name? You know the present gang of intellectual cats and dogs--these middle-married, limousine-liberal matrons and homosexual proconsuls--the kind of stuff who have ideas of their own. It's dangerous for a city.

Riess: [laughter]

Newhall: It is. Well, in those days we had Bill Blake and Peter Tamaris and the Greeks supervisors and the Irish supervisors and I think there were probably two or three Jews in there and the Italians--I think old Mr. Ertola, Judge Jack Ertola's father. We were all pretty good friends. Everybody got along. And so--this is hard to explain, because again, it is totally personal, it totally will run against the grain of people who have great confidence in democracy and so on. But the city ran pretty much as almost a feudal state. For example, we could discuss matters with some of these supervisors and perhaps on a close, informal basis. And if they were not committed spiritually or intellectually or financially elsewhere, they would listen to an exposition of the merits of some of these civic problems--at least as they were perceived by the Chronicle.

The Architectural Environment

Newhall: And we began it by first of all sort of pushing a little persuasive power around on such matters as when the Johnson family hotel--Mrs. Johnson finally sold the Palace Hotel to the Sheraton people and they put a big sign up on the roof of their hotel saying "Sheraton-Palace." This to me was the beginning of the end of old San Francisco, again. The Palace Hotel was part of the fabric of San

Francisco history, and to have some carpetbaggers like the Sheratons come into this town and put up this ghastly sign--. Oops, sorry, I'm off! That came later.

The Southern Pacific put up this great big SP sign on top of their Market Street building. I don't think you were here then. This became the biggest fight we got into. We sent photographers up to the top of Nob Hill by the Mark Hopkins and the Fairmont to show how the Southern Pacific sign with the huge SP letters on it blocked the beautiful bay view of all those nice people up on Nob Hill. We came out I think with an editorial suggesting they enter into negotiations with the Sheraton-Palace and send their sign over to the Palace Hotel, the S-P there, because that was a much lower profile of the hotel's building.

Well, the first time we pushed these poor SP people around, they were not accustomed to it. So pretty soon both the Sheraton people and the Southern Pacific--the Southern Pacific has always hated us or me or whatever--but they began to listen. And SP finally did take down their sign. And after that, local activists and figureheads would a lot of times come by ahead of time.

Now at this point the Chronicle was doing a lot of stories on environmental problems. Temko was probably writing then, and Mike Harris--you know, the BART story is another big one. We really were fighting against building BART.

All of a sudden the community was beginning to catch up with the peril to its environment because of some big high buildings that were going up with not much let or hindrance and so on. And as the Chronicle continued to make a rumpus about hit-or-miss development, a lot of people had a tendency to come by and chat about their plans to see what the Chronicle was going to say about it. And they did that because if we didn't like it, the developers thought they would be in trouble. The supervisors were pretty much responsive to the Chronicle--to certain representations that we made. Some builders' plans tended to fail if the Chronicle sounded off in a negative way, or made any serious waves.

There was a system--all this sounds so cut-and-dried now--I had a very good friend who is an active lobbyist in San Francisco. (And, by the way, there is somebody, if you could get him on tape you would hear a most amazing picture of San Francisco politics.)

Riess: Who is that?

Newhall: Dave Nelson. It would be fascinating. I'll talk to you about it sometime.

Dave had worked for the Chronicle for years. He knew the City Hall inside out. He knew every supervisor and mayor. He was kind

of a communicator, a liaison man. Didn't work for us then. But he had worked for us in the past and he had been one of Paul Smith's secretaries for a while. Nelson had his own office. But when various promoters or builders would drop by the Chronicle for guidance--and these people included John Portman, the Atlanta architect and developer, and the Rockefeller crowd, and the Bank of America, and the Crockers, and a lot more--I would say, "Look, if you want to present your plans and you want to get your project through you might find it easier to talk to Dave or somebody like him who can present your plans in such a way that perhaps your project will be accepted."

Embarcadero Center

Riess: What's a for instance on this?

Newhall: You want an example?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: All right, the Rockefeller development including the Hyatt Regency Hotel down on the waterfront. You know those hotels, that big Rockefeller block, three or four buildings? Well, they came in to City Hall to get their permits and the supervisors threw them out.

Riess: You mean the whole Embarcadero Center?

Newhall: Yes, the whole Embarcadero thing, those huge buildings the Rockefellers put up. They came to town with their plans and they had it kind of drawn up and the supervisors said no, you're not going to do it. Because there had been so much talking, including on the part of the Chronicle, about the overbuilding of downtown San Francisco. I can give you chapter and verse on this one. I saw their plans, we would talk about them in editorial conference. No secrets, no under the table, but we would talk about them.

I'm sorry, I've got to go back one more step. It all started with the development, the Golden Gateway project that was put up by --oh, I don't know--Petrini or somebody, whoever did it. [Perini Corporation]

Riess: Wurster, Bernardi, & Emmons [and DeMars and Reay] were the architects [for the Golden Gateway residential development, 1961-1963]. Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill won the competition for design and development, 1959.]

Newhall: Oh, well, whoever. And we had some objection to that because we thought there was a certain amount of "sameness" to the design, or I

did, anyway, have some reservations about the whole thing. Anyway, the Golden Gateway went up, and there it is. It's okay. Not too bad, not too bad.

Incidentally, the Golden Gateway was such a big, garish example of wholesale design, and was so overpowering in downtown Old San Francisco, it started me thinking about the whole problem of urban rebuilding and how it was going to impact our fair city. Anyway, we did an editorial expressing some doubt about the "sameness" and the "lack of variation" in that particular architecture. And this really got me started on--or plunged me deeper--into my Lorenzo de Medici phase.

But the supervisors or the Planning Commission threw out the Rockefellers, because here they were, a big, fat, juicy New York target for the supervisors. I thought about it: this project meant some billions of dollars invested in San Francisco. I had met the Rockefeller architect, John Portman, briefly. He came in. Dave might have brought him in, I don't remember. And the Rockefeller people went up to City Hall and they were thrown out. So I thought about it, and the next evening--Portman was in Atlanta by that time --I picked up the phone and called him up.

I said, "Hey, John, have you given up hope? Are you going to pull out of San Francisco?" He said, "Oh, we can't handle that. Look, we're going to forget it." I said, "Now look John, don't give up. What can be good for this city can also be good for you. Are you willing to modify your designs to a certain extent that perhaps make it more attractive or a little less boxlike, because San Francisco wants you and wants Mr. Rockefeller's money. Don't give up the ship."

I got hold of Dave again. I said, "Now look, let's see what we can do. Let's talk to Portman and find out what they would come up with again." Their buildings I think were all one block, they weren't cut apart. It was a real Chinese wall in the beginning. It ended up that they did come up with some designs or variations that we were willing to go along with. And the word got out that the Chronicle would not oppose or criticize the supervisors for approving the new version of the Rockefeller development. Well the Rockefeller project went ahead. I'm not saying it is the greatest, but I don't think it's the worst.

Riess: It's one of the greatest.

Newhall: Well, it was considerably revised from the first plan. There are about three buildings and this hotel, as I recall.

Riess: Embarcadero One, Two, Three.

Newhall: That's it, yes.

Riess: They's slim, they're remarkably elegant.

Newhall: They're better. They weren't that good originally. And that is exactly the way it happened--at least from where I sat.

Bank of America World Headquarters Building

Newhall: Now another one that's possibly even more illustrative of the Chronicle's influence: the Bank of America, which has always been our home town bank, which I've always been very fond of, they've done banking for the family and so on and so forth, they had plans for this big building downtown as their world headquarters.

It so happens in the block where they were going to put their world headquarters, there was a little dead-end alley. And they couldn't build their building on that block as long as the alley belonged to the city. It would have to be sold to them. They went to the Board of Supervisors, or the Planning Commission, whichever --anyway, it ends up at the board--and asked, please, would the city quitclaim this alley? The bank would then buy it from the city. But the city people said, no.

So I heard about that. The Bank of America people, for reasons best known to themselves, sent a little delegation into the office to talk about it. I was in sort of this Lorenzo mood again. I said, "Okay look, this is going to be your world headquarters?" Oh, yes," they said. I said, "Okay, would you be willing to make a trade?" (This is when all the fighting about the environment was going on.)

"Would you be willing to do this? Write a letter from the chief executive office of the Bank of America expressing your interest in the San Francisco cityscape, that you intend to build the most beautiful building in the world, to bring luster to this city. And write this letter in a way that will be approved ahead of time. In this way your letter can serve as either a crutch or a weapon for the supervisors in the future when they are handling cases of this nature. Would you put down on paper your interest in the San Francisco cityscape? And in return for the right to buy your little alleyway there, are you willing to agree to some architectural review of what you're going to do?" And they said, yes indeed, they would.

They wrote a letter to the board, I believe it was, maybe the Planning Commission. I forget how it went in that case. But they sent it to us first for editing. And indeed, their petition went through and they did build their building. And the building is

there today. Again, you can like it or not like it. I think it's pretty good, but it's a big baby, it's kind of dark.

Riess: It seems like a small thing that you asked them to do? Why was that such a significant thing?

Newhall: I think that the Bank of America was San Francisco's most significant, well-known sort of financial trademark institution--certainly in the West Coast--maybe in the world. And I felt if we could get a financial institution, which had a great big heart of black stone as you will see down at the plaza there--anyway, if we could get the Bank of America, as the premier institutional financial structure in America, to go on record as admitting or accepting or even urging that aesthetic considerations be made a significant part of the approval or disapproval of a structure, that this would have struck a great blow for beauty. It's as simple as that. They sent the letter, and you might--I don't think I have a copy of it, I'm not sure, but it might be interesting to dredge it out, it must be there somewhere. To me, that was a hell of a step ahead for protecting the cityscape.

Riess: And it has been quoted in accepting and rejecting buildings since?

Newhall: I don't know. I would doubt it. But I thought it might be useful. You see, the bank stated in their letter that they were all for beauty and wished to conform to the spirit of San Francisco--it's quite a letter--they wanted to fit in, and not just build another architectural pile. Anyway, I thought it was pretty interesting.*

Riess: All this is very interesting. Are you saying about Portman and Rockefeller that they already sensed that the city would shoot them down?

Newhall: They had already been turned down.

Riess: They had initially gone to the Planning Commission, or to the supervisors?

Newhall: Well, either one or both. I forget how it worked.

Riess: And they had been turned down because the commissioners or supervisors knew that in turn the people, spurred on by the Chronicle, would reject the plan.

Newhall: That's the idea. Exactly. We unfortunately in the past had called the dogs out, so we had to keep politicians under control. It was difficult sometimes. Because it's all very well to have a beautiful city, but you also have to have a city that can support itself, too, and to lose Rockefeller would have been horrid.

* This letter is included in the Appendices.

Other Schemes

Newhall: Now I must add that the Lorenzo the Great game can be a bit tricky sometimes. Sometimes after they have feasted too long on cityscape design the readers and the public can get out of hand. Then they start rioting in the streets and then nobody can build anything!

The beauty of San Francisco has been that it has been built in spurts, here and there. There is perhaps too much highrise here. But for a while anything that was highrise like the pyramid tower of Transamerica was a target of the half-educated mob. They begin shooting down everything. Well, now that doesn't make sense either.

Riess: Alvin Duskin, that was a name.

Newhall: Oh, there was a guy. He was a problem. He ran for supervisor or something, but he always wanted to shoot down everything, didn't he?

Riess: Yes, that's right.

Newhall: I'd forgotten that.

Riess: Dress manufacturer.

Newhall: I think he was the haberdasher who had a couple of good-looking professional models or something. They were tenants of ours over in Berkeley.

Riess: Were you involved with Ghirardelli Square?

Newhall: Oh, Karl Kortum was behind that, but of course the Chronicle was, too. Karl, you see, was a very dear friend of Dave's. This is all incestuous, and Karl was always pushing something along, because Karl has pretty remarkable taste until he overdoes it. Oh, I knew Bill Roth, and the Maritime Museum. It's all tied in. It's hard to unscramble it.

For a while not much ever happened in town that the Chronicle didn't okay. That's a fact. And then it got a little out of hand and so on.

Riess: I think that's very interesting about the Bank of America and Embarcadero Center. Are there any other projects that come to mind?

Levi Plaza and Vaillaincourt Fountain

Newhall: Oh, I'm sure there are many, because we were sort of with it all the

time. We fought, fought, fought to keep the Seawall Warehouse from being destroyed--that was an old warehouse down underneath the cliff at Telegraph Hill. But the boomers they tore it down. It was in what is now the Levi-Strauss Plaza area. And Levi-Strauss has done a pretty darned good job, considering, I think. It could have been so awful. And you see, much of our early pressure, publicity and hullabaloo did result in much more sensible planning. Karl Kortum was very, very active in inserting a little sanity into the Levi Strauss plaza project.

Now we lost some of these environmental fights. I'll tell you one we lost is that stupid Vaillaincourt Fountain at the bottom of Market Street there. That's the damnedest thing I ever saw.

Riess: You'd seen the plans for that?

Newhall: Oh sure, we had Temko prancing around the town. We got him all fired up and we couldn't knock it off.

Riess: Why did you lose it, do you think?

Newhall: We had quite a lot of resistance to some of these projects because there was a lot of federal redevelopment money running around. Justin Herman, he was redevelopment director or commissioner or whatever. And I don't think he was too keen on the Chronicle. The Vaillaincourt Fountain--you know the one I'm talking about?

Riess: Yes, I certainly do.

Newhall: Temko described it better than anyone else. No, Karl Kortum did. "It was laid by a large dog with a square rectum," he wrote. But anyway--. It was not worthy of San Francisco. I wanted to bring the Vicar of Bray, or at least the remains of the Vicar, back to San Francisco. This is a skeleton of an old sailing ship that came into the bay before '49 or before '50. The Vicar is in the Falkland Islands, rotting in the decrepitude. We could bring it up from Falklands and throw away the silly Vaillaincourt fountain. The Vicar was a real '49er ship.

I have always felt this old sailing ship was an important San Francisco relic. If we could bring the Vicar back to San Francisco it could be set into place at the foot of Market Street. It would function something like a shrine to our early history--like the cathedral in Coventry in England which was left in ruins, a very moving memorial of the Second World War German bombings of England.

Black, Female, and Homosexual Reporters##

Riess: When did you hire your first black reporter?

Newhall: I have no recollection of ever having a black reporter on the Chronicle. Sorry. Incidentally, we had a brilliant black reporter on our paper down south.

Riess: That didn't come up when black power issues came up?

Newhall: Oh, it would have come up. I really have no recollection. I mean, there was never anybody saying, "You can't have one." Jesus Christ, I was hiring black reporters down at the Signal when I was still on the Chronicle.

But one aspect of that perhaps you'll be interested in, there were no female reporters on the Chronicle with the exception of Carolyn Anspacher until after she left, again with the exception of Ruth. Carolyn would permit Ruth on the staff. Abe Mellinkoff would not hire a woman, and it wasn't because the editors didn't want women on the staff, it was because Carolyn wouldn't stand for it.

Riess: Why?

Newhall: Oh, she was a bitch. I love her. I've known her ever since the day I walked into the paper and she gave me a big kiss, and we were buddies ever after. But no woman could get along with her. And if you wanted Carolyn you couldn't hire anybody else.

Riess: She wasn't doing woman's page though, was she?

Newhall: Oh, there were lots of women on the women's page, sure. Oh no, I'm talking about reporters. Now I must confess, there may have been a black reporter somewhere. I honestly have no recollection of one. Do they have any now?

Riess: I don't know.

Newhall: I don't either. I'm sure they do. I'm sure they've made all kinds of a point about this so-called minority business.

This is off the subject a little bit, but I don't think we had any oriental reporters or Asian--whichever you prefer to call them --at that time. I'm talking now about news reporters, outside. There were almost solid women in the women's section, although we had a man in charge for a while. He had to protect himself by buying a plaid jacket and loud neckties and such. But anyway, we started the Question Man column early on. This was back in the fifties still, I think. And so what happens? After a couple of months the Chronicle's Question Man was picked up by the vice squad in the men's room of Macy's, trying to get into the pants of a customer there in one of the toilet closets. So here the Examiner was about to go on a story that the Chronicle Question Man--and I'm quoting now--is a roaring "faggot."

I'll never forget, I had to call this poor guy in. He was a nice man. Nobody knew anything about this or cared. This was early. But we all agreed that he could not represent the Chronicle publicly any longer, because--I have already talked about the problem with Count Marco and everything. I don't really remember too clearly the fellow's name, but anyway I talked with him and he decided no, his future was not in San Francisco journalism. Now think how different that is from today. And I just brought this up because you asked about a black. Well, here's a homosexual.

I think every paper, particularly in self-conscious San Francisco, certainly has women and blacks and Asians, you know, the house reporters, and then some of them are probably the best on the staff now. I have no idea. By the way, we had a lot of homosexuals on the Chronicle all the time, all the years. Of course, they were the best writers, but it was all a closet kind of deal.

Riess: And you didn't know it, or did you?

Newhall: Oh, in some cases, I knew it, sure. Some of them were--still are--my best friends, actually.

Riess: What are you saying about plaid jackets? What does that mean?

Newhall: Oh, I just mean he wore loud clothes, you know. He had to make himself into some kind of a figure, a character, in order to withstand all these assertive women who were taking over. That's all I meant by that. He came to work with a bow tie one day, a plaid jacket, and was growing a goatee or something. Oh, my god--you know, he had just been a guy before.

Riess: I think that now there's a feeling that you need a black person to cover a black story.

Newhall: That's the worst thing you can do, but a lot of people felt that. Of course sometimes it's the smartest thing you can do if you're out to get the subjects to talk, the subjects involved in the story. But this is a very peculiar subject: why should any editor hire a woman to cover a woman's story, a man to cover a man's story, a black to cover a black's story? Do you need a homosexual to cover a homosexual's story.

Riess: Well, you need often an Indian to talk to an Indian, so I thought maybe generalizing from that--.

Newhall: That is correct. Oh, if you can get the people to talk better, then fine.

Riess: That's what I mean.

Newhall: But not in a stereotyped fashion. If I was a black person and when I made news all I ever got was a black reporter I might be sore.

Riess: Oh no, I mean, you know, when you're going into a ghetto that you send a "brother" in or whatever.

Newhall: It helps. Sure, that would help.

"Dear Abby"

Riess: Speaking of the women's page, tell me about getting Dear Abby.

Newhall: Dear Abby. I mentioned earlier, I believe, that I had to come to a parting of the ways with Larry Fanning because of just sort of overriding, perhaps psychic differences in terms of approach to the news. We were always, and have been until the day he died, very good friends. But he went to Chicago. He later bought a paper and died in Anchorage, Alaska.

Larry was very popular among a lot of syndicate salesmen because they dealt with him for years. They would come out, you know, selling Mutt and Jeff, or Ann Landers in this case, and Jack Anderson or Bob Allen, and whatever was available in the way of syndicated columnists. I guess a couple of the syndicate salesmen were very loyal or friendly to Larry. So when Larry left some of them thought, well, this is no way for Newhall or the Chronicle to behave. So they decided to punish us. This would have been the Chicago Times Syndicate, whoever was handling Ann Landers.

So Harry Baker, the salesman's name was, took Ann Landers away from the Chronicle. We'd been using Ann's advice to the lovelorn--I mean, to me an advice column, a horoscope column, or a palm-reading column--an editor feels like it is fine to put one in your paper for the credulous people or the lonely people or the housewives who have a problem or two. But I mean I am basically indifferent to this kind of stuff. They have nothing whatever to do with journalism, they are simple amusement or possibly solace. But features like this are good for promotion and circulation, like naked animals. Now believe me, Ann Landers is no more important to the human race than is a story on naked animals.

Hold on!--I think the statement I just made is unfair and incorrect and could be demolished in a debate. But so be it, let it stand. Anyway, they [Chicago Sun-Times] took Ann Landers away from us, and that apparently was going to hurt us a little bit. So we fooled around. They took away George Lichty, too. Lichty used to do a cartoon called "Grin and Bear It."

Riess: Did Ann Landers end up in the Examiner?

Newhall: In the Call-Bulletin, I think, which is Hearst also. It may have gone to the Ex when the Call folded. I don't know.

Riess: But okay, she was gone.

Newhall: Yes, gone, and supposedly that was going to put the Chronicle out of business, you know, that kind of a deal. Well, Stan Arnold came in one day and he said, "Hey, this babe"--no, he didn't say "babe," Stan was always too much of a gentleman. He said, "This young woman just walked in." (I think he said that.) "I think she could do a good advice column." I said, "Do you think that we are ready to manufacture our own lonely hearts adviser?"

"She's pretty good-looking", he said, "and she's wearing a mink coat that reaches from her shoulders down to the heels of the woman next to her. She wants to do an advice column." I said, "What makes you think she can do it?" He said, "Oh, I'm pretty sure she can do it. She brought in some samples." I said, "Well, okay, we'll take a look. But why her?" He said, "Well, she's the twin sister of Ann Landers." I said, "Oh."

So she came in. And Abby is no shrinking violet, you know. She had all the mousey humility of a kind of a hungry panther. But anyway, she came in, she was all gung-ho to go. She said, "I can write this stuff." We got her to do some samples, and then Stan Arnold sort of straightened them out and I edited perhaps the first few. They were just samples. And Gordon looked them over.

The most important thing--by the way, this is the true, unadorned, unvarnished story of the birth of Dear Abby, like the birth of Venus in the clam shell, you know--the most important thing about any syndicate or any feature that you're going to start is the title. You need a title people can remember and talk about. Because it's the first thing people see. She wanted to call it, I think, Mary Jones. I said, "Look, forget it. You can't. That's terrible." I'll think up a name, we'll talk about it next time you come in."

Well, to my way of thinking the only way to get anybody to read those columns--Abby's columns were originally sort of slick and naughty, you might say, frank--was get a puritanical name to begin with, like Chastity or Prudence or something like that, and then you come up with a second name with some class. The name that came out was Van Buren. I said, "That's a good name. People will remember that. Now what do we get for a first name?" I was probably talking with Dolly about it, or maybe Stan Arnold or our promotions manager. I said, "Here, give me a dictionary of names." and I went through them. There was A-b, Abigail, "Perfect. We'll go for Abigail. Abigail Van Buren, Dear Abby. It works fine." "Oh, great!"

Well, Dear Abby fought this and she fought it hard. I still have in my files a telegram saying, "Mary Jones okay but Dear Abby, never." But that's the way the name got in and the column started. And you know, she was an ambitious young lady. I liked her fine. She had her own style. She's a smart girl like her sister. And she made her stuff readable. That's all that matters.

Riess: And they were real letters?

Newhall: In the end, yes. But at the beginning, for the first two weeks or so, you've got to fake them up because to start with there aren't any letters coming in for Dear Abby. But she got real letters, believe me, within oh, maybe a week or two.

Then Abby wanted to be syndicated. Usually we can't pay our columnists too much, so I said, "Okay, but we want to retain the rights, not only to your column, but to the title of your column in perpetuity in California north of a line east and west running through Monterey," I believe, something like that. Well, she really squawked and kicked and yelled. But I think that deal still stands. I've got the document somewhere. You know, we're good friends, but Abby now goes around the country with this spurious story about how she thought up the name. She says, well she had a second cousin five generations back who was related to President Van Buren, and some crap like that. But this came right out of our own office.

Her column--to give you an idea of the sincerity and seriousness with which I approach something like that--is right in the line with horoscopes, you know. My god!

Riess: Well, she's very moral.

Newhall: Oh, they are, basically.

Riess: Always handing out good advice from the American Cancer Society and this and that.

Newhall: That's right. Well, she's careful to cover her tracks. She's always got a rabbi in one pocket and a Roman Catholic priest in another--and despite the wise cracks, her column is supportive and helpful to people in need. She wouldn't tolerate it, nor would we have tolerated or published anything that would hurt or damage or jeopardize anyone.

In the beginning, I told Stanley, "Now look, this is going to be a local column. Her value to us is that she's writing here from San Francisco." None of this stuff about Mary Blowhard or something from Missouri. (These columnists love to show how big they are: they want readers to think their letters come from all over the country.) I said, "The letters we print must come within our

circulation area." In the beginning Abby's letters would be datelined from Vallejo and San Rafael and San Mateo, this, that, and the other. I said, "Now, no matter where they write from, you've got to remember this: first, anything goes in any letter except for incest or bestiality and outright profanity. But if we do happen to get into incest or bestiality, such a letter must be datelined Oakland." And that's the way we left it. So if you back and read Abby's early columns you see all the dirty letters came from Oakland. That was just for laughs.

After about a few months, maybe six months or so, Abby got some pretty good syndicate offers. So she went off to the syndicates and now her letters are worldwide, you know. And the column, as far as I am concerned, is not terribly exciting.

Oh, by the way, just for the record, Dear Abby was born Pauline Esther Friedman and her close friends call her Popo. She is also Mrs. Morton Phillips. Ann Landers was born Esther Pauline Friedman and her friends call her Eppie. Eppie was married to (and divorced from) Jules Lederer.

Newhall's View of the Bay Area

Riess: Were you always ragging on Oakland?

Newhall: Oh, but it's easy. That's all. One has to adopt a certain overview of the world, or a role. And I was simply playing a role for all these years, and the role was that San Francisco should be an independent city-state or an independent nation, and that everything else is trash. And that was about it, you know.

Riess: So what was your role in the independent city-state then? Are you king?

Newhall: Well, I once told them on Channel 4 when I lost the mayor's race, which was a horrible affair, that I would come back some day not as mayor but as king. But, you know, I think I was overstating it. I have this profound, believe me, profound admiration and respect for every ratty little part of San Francisco. This is Camelot. And the Camelot legend is why so many people buy and read the Chronicle to this day, because they all feel that by reading the Chronicle they can participate in Camelot. The whole thing's a fantasy, in a sense.

I might mention, because it sort of ties in here, the circulation aims of the Chronicle. The Chronicle is aimed at a circulation area not in a linear geographic area around the San Francisco Bay, but in a demographical and topographical way. This

paper basically, when I was there, was edited for people living--I think I mentioned it in passing once--between about 150 feet up to about 2,000 feet in altitude, on the grounds that the upper middle class or middle middle class and the upper class all live above 100 feet in altitude, above sea level. I don't know where you live.

Riess: I live below that.

Newhall: Do you? Where do you live?

Riess: I live on The Alameda in north Berkeley.

Newhall: Well hell, that's over 250 feet, I think.

Riess: I'm not at all sure about that.

Newhall: Well, it's close.

Riess: In other words, you were not writing it for Albany.

Newhall: Well, certainly for a good part of Albany--certainly for The Alameda, I mean really. I think you're higher than you think you are.

Riess: Well, thank you.

Newhall: Yes. I mean, in altitude. I know our place was about 1,200 or 1,800 feet. I can't remember which.

Riess: Really ? I'll have to get a topo of Berkeley.

Newhall: Take a look and see what your altitude is. And that cut through Sausalito and the hills and everywhere. The Examiner tends to appeal to the mud flats--. But anyway, go ahead.

Resignation, 1971

Riess: You resigned in 1971. The reasons I think we've more or less covered.

Newhall: Yes. I really felt I'd done everything I could. And I was really tired, I was really tired, because the stress had been considerable. I had a heart attack, you know, in the middle of all this, and I had to go to the hospital.

Riess: When?

Newhall: 1959. And I had to go to the hospital for a while and then I was

supposed to lie down an hour after lunch every day in the office if I went to the office, which I did, and to rest and get away from the pressure. But Charlie would always come in after lunch and pull up a chair next to the couch where I was lying down, so things just sort of continued the way they were, bless his heart. He was very loyal. Charlie was a character. But I had got ulcers. I was really a mess. I started to do some more drinking and gave it up quick, because that was horrible.

I will never forget, for the last year I had trouble with this good leg. I had to go to the hospital and have a very painful operation. And I was nervous about it because I didn't want to lose the second leg at all. The phone rang and a dissident group, or a group of young Turks, insisted on coming out and discussing Chronicle problems about two or three days after the operation. Hell, I was full of dope, just lying there like a turnip. And I thought, "Oh, I've had it! I haven't got the energy any longer." So I just finally quit.

Oh, and the other--maybe I mentioned this earlier. I was always worried the day was going to come when I would be too dependent on my income from the Chronicle to be able to quit. I thought I'd better quit now while I can hack it, and I just quit. I looked for a parachute job, as general editor or something of San Francisco Magazine, which was a very frustrating, involved kind of thing. It was not very satisfactory, nor was I able to do too much. I think I spent too much money for John Vietor, who was the publisher at the time. I had made a deal with him in writing that for one year we could spend x dollars. But all of a sudden I think he found out he couldn't come up with that or something. And I quit.

Newhall's Mayoral Race

Newhall: I had to do something, so I ran for mayor. And that was a disaster, at least a political disaster. But I had a very good time at it, in a sense.

Riess: Because you weren't all set then to move to southern California?

Newhall: No. I didn't want to go to southern California, really. But anyway, I lost the mayor's race, worse than Hinckle did the last time. Well, maybe not, Hinckle didn't do very well either.

I'll never forget Bill Roth--after I had lost the mayor's race Bill Roth decided he wanted to run for governor of California. We went up and had lunch together at the PU Club and he said, "Look, Scott, you've had some experience in politics when you ran for

mayor. Did you enjoy it?" I said, "No, not really. It cost me a lot of money."

(I would take no donations of any sort. I just can't be beholden to anyone. I don't know how our politicians can go around asking you to come to a dinner party and pay money. What the hell's the matter with them? But anyway, that's political life in America.)

Bill Roth said, "Well, do you think I ought to run for governor?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, why not?" I said, "Because you won't win, it's going to cost you a lot of money." He said, "I don't know." So the damn fool ran for governor and he lost that worse than I lost the mayorship!

Riess: I'm sure you had lots of backers, but you didn't allow them to give you contributions?

Newhall: Oh, no, I wouldn't take a penny. How can you take anything from a guy, and then when he comes in and asks you if you'll okay tearing down some historical landmark somewhere, say no?

Riess: But don't you think that once people put money behind you then you might have had more of a campaign?

Newhall: I don't think so. While I was out campaigning I said everything I thought, more or less as I'm saying it here. And very few people like to vote for anyone in public office who is either an independent or wants to go his own way. They won't stand for it. Look at these guys right now today, with Bush and Jesse Jackson. It's disgraceful the way they're behaving and sniveling around. And they would take money from anybody.

Riess: How did you feel about Alioto?

Newhall: He was smart, he was a good guy--at least in all my relations with him.

Riess: So it's not as if it was a campaign based on saving San Francisco from the worst fate?

Newhall: Oh, from a pragmatic standpoint I didn't have that much of a beef with Joe.

This is the story of how I got involved. It comes back to your old friend Karl Kortum again. I was sitting around there on my hands, unhappy at San Francisco Magazine. He said, "Hey, why don't you run for mayor? The only guy running is Joe Alioto. He's not going to win because he's very unpopular in some quarters"--which was true, he had spent most of his terms sitting in a witness chair in one or another lawsuit; this guy was in a lot of trouble--"and

nobody else is going to run."

So I filed and put together a little money to run a campaign. The next thing that happened is good old Dianne. (And she had announced publicly that she was not going to run.) She suddenly held a press conference and said she was going to run and I called her, I said, "Jesus, why don't you wait 'til next time, Dianne? You come in here and nobody's going to win except Joe." No, she wanted to run for mayor. And I knew she was not going to make it. I knew I wasn't going to by this time. But you don't have the guts to pull out, really, because you've got people who've volunteered their help and stuff.

The next thing is Harold Dobbs comes into the race. Now Harold had run for mayor once or twice before. We had endorsed him and backed him strongly at one point on the Chronicle. And it's a long, involved story, but I have been told, and I have no reason to disbelieve it, that a fellow called Ed Reinecke who became the lieutenant governor at one time and a chairman of the California Republican party--Ed had a beef with the Signal and with me personally because we blew the whistle on him on nonsense he was doing in Washington, D.C. as a congressman--I was given to understand that Reinecke told Dobbs to go ahead and run because he wanted to be sure and keep me out of it. Well, what the hell, I didn't have a chance anyway. So the race ended up with Alioto, Dobbs and good old Dianne.

Dobbs and Dianne split the Jewish vote, and Joe came in Number One. I don't think he had a majority. But anyway, then Dianne and Dobbs came in. Someone had around 30,000 or 40,000 or something. I had only 12,000 or 13,000. So I figured it cost me about $10 or $12.50 a vote. And that was the worst deal I ever got into.

Riess: What was your platform?

Newhall: One, that San Francisco had to cut out any discriminatory segregation policies towards blacks. That was pretty important in those days. I had written it all out in position statements. I was very liberal, basically, you know, I talked about all the architectural, environmental problems. Oh, wanted to raise money one way or another for San Francisco. I had no strings attached, independence forever. I kidded everybody around. I ran some kind of funny ads in the paper.

Riess: But that's what I was going to ask you, whether you did it seriously?

Newhall: I campaigned hard. I did, I think, a lot more than Hinckle ever did. My god, every day I was going around three, four, five places. But I didn't tell people what they wanted to hear. I said, "Of course, we're going to have to raise taxes. Of course we're going

to have to do this. Don't listen to this nonsense." But people don't want to hear it and they won't vote for it.

But believe me, I'm not overstating it when I say if you want to run for office successfully don't ever tell the American voter what you really think. Don't ever tell anybody. When you are making political speeches tell them what you think they want to hear, and that's all. You'll get very few votes by telling the truth.

Taking the Vows, as Editor

Newhall: During these conversations I have always been embarrassed to say, "I did this...I did that...I did the other things." For better or for worse I have been slipping in the vernacular of the first person singular because that's sort of the way I saw it and the way it went from where I sat.

Paul Smith, as an example--Paul Smith always had to play his part in the center front of the stage, and his unfortunate problems left a scar on my professional, and I suppose my personal, soul. As far as I was concerned, the Chronicle was always going to be in the center of the stage and I was merely the center stage hand. I was a kind of elusive working stiff.

If the Chronicle was a success, then the staff should get the credit. If the Chronicle got in trouble, then I was resigned to taking the blame; the credit should go elsewhere. Any blame I was delighted to have attached to me, because I figured, well, I can handle that.

The first thing a serious editor should do is to realize he is not participating in a popularity contest. And he must take a vow to not unreasonably favor his friends, and never fear his foes.

Riess: "Will I be able to keep my friends?" Did you lose a lot of friends?

Newhall: No, not many that I can remember. Long ago, the day I accepted the job as executive editor, I felt that, like a priest takes a vow of celibacy, I had to make a vow that my own personal social life was of no consideration in terms of my responsibility as an editor, and I figured that my friends must suffer along with me--mostly suffer, rather than reap rewards. And there have been many examples.

The most difficult thing I ever had to do was to make sure the Chronicle ran a prominent story on the suicide of the son of my dear friend Charles Camp. I mentioned Charles earlier in this conversation. His youngest son, Roddy, had suffered a terrible

injury, actually while being a guest at a party at my house. His back had been broken in an automobile accident as he was leaving the party. Roddy had been confined to a wheelchair and then later on committed suicide, and of course this just chewed up Charles terribly. But I talked to Charles about the suicide and explained that it was news, and of public interest. And Charles just said, "Well, if this will benefit any other child, please do everything you think is proper." Roddy after the accident had grown a long beard and had become hooked on narcotics. It was a kind of horrible "hippie" suicide.

In another case of journalistic celibacy, my own son Jon down at the Signal--he was editor then of the Signal--was picked up by the sheriff for growing marijuana. We played this story right across the top of the front page. As an editor I could not suppress news about my family. I just happen to be another person where my family affairs were concerned.

Unfortunately I have known many editors and publishers who will show a lot of consideration to their peers or their friends and keep embarrassing or painful stories about them out of the paper, which is the most childish, ridiculous thing you can do. I've never done that in my life, nor been inclined to it.

X SAVING SAN FRANCISCO, AND OTHER THINGS

[Interview 7: May 3, 1988]##

The United States Mint Building

Riess: I know from our last interview that you had an impact on the San Francisco skyline by making the Embarcadero Center buildings possible. Are there any other untold behind the scenes stories?

Newhall: Well, I don't know. Some would probably occur to me. I know we lost the fight on the Seawall Warehouse. I may have even mentioned that. That's been torn down. It was at the foot of Telegraph Hill.

Riess: And that's what then became the Levi-Strauss Plaza. And we talked about the Vaillaincourt Fountain.

Newhall: I forgot about that. I see they've turned the water off now with the current rationing. That's not much of a loss.

But I've mentioned quite a few things. I've mentioned Allan Temko and his impact on the cathedral and the San Mateo Bridge.

Riess: That's right. I know that there are three "savings" that are very important that you were involved with. One was the old United States Mint. Would you tell the story for me?

Newhall: This was quite early on, for me I mean, back in the middle-fifties. There was a big move on, particularly by the Call-Bulletin, to get rid of the mint, demolish the mint for some reason or other. I think they probably wanted to put up either a hotel or a something-or-other. The mint, of course, is right across Mission Street from the Chronicle. It was a nice old federal building, and at that time San Francisco was being demolished, stone by stone, granite block by granite block.

Well, I liked all this old stuff. I'm just a collector at heart, or a junkie. Among other things, I used to like bronze

doorknobs. There were some very handsome doorknobs in a lot of these government buildings, and I remember I had a set of doorknobs from the Hall of Justice before that went, and a big key, too--a key to one of the cells, a huge lock arrangement. This was the Hall of Justice downtown on Kearny and Washington, right across from Portsmouth Square. It was sort of like the Medici Palace in Florence. It was one of the first grand old San Francisco municipal temples to go. The development pirates were in on the deal and they wanted to put up a hotel, a Holiday Inn. This noble hostelry is still there.*

In order to get a permit to build the Holiday Inn, the developers had to get some of the local Chinatown honchos to go along, so they put out the word that they were really building a Chinese cultural center. Well, Allan Temko got onto it. The "Chinese cultural center" actually was nothing but sort of a mezzanine in a Holiday Inn. The rest of it is a Holiday Inn hotel.

But they did go ahead with it, and they managed to tear down this great old Hall of Justice building. Believe me, it was very handsome. It was truly, almost stone for stone, copied after one of the Florentine palaces. I liked it, of course, because my first day at work or second day at work as a cameraman in 1935 I had to go down there in the mornings for the police beat, to cover the courts as a photographer.

Riess: The mint had not functioned as a mint since 1937.

Newhall: No, they built the new mint up on the hill there by where San Francisco State University used to be, off of Market and Waller, up in there somewhere. The old mint was sort of empty, except during the war and right after the war I believe they had some Interior Department offices, federal offices there. The city was willing to tear it down because it was no longer a mint, but I just didn't want to see it go because my window looked right out at it across the street--and of course I've always liked money, real silver coin. I've always been involved with coins. I used to make coins, pour silver bars or gold bars or whatever.

Riess: Where? You could do it at home?

Newhall: Oh, yes, certainly I knew how to pour silver and gold bars. I went up through the mint one time quite early on and watched them pour

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*Chinese Cultural and Trade Center and Holiday Inn, 1971, "a hotel with token culture in the base." Woodbridge, 1973.

some silver and gold ingots. You know, five-ounce silver bars or ten-ounce gold bars--gold is twice as heavy as silver. It's a fascinating business. If one realizes that the basis of all commerce and cultural concourse is money, mostly the precious metals, one becomes fascinated with it. Of course for the moment the computers of the world have tended to make twenty dollar gold pieces obsolete.

I hated to see the old mint go. So we just started for the hell of it a campaign, a crusade, covering it one way or another, getting important people to speak out on it, so-called important people. And the Call would come out with an editorial saying "tear down the mint." We'd cry, "Save the mint." "Protect the mint." And in the end we won out.

Jack Shelley was still a congressman then. (I think I discussed him earlier. He later became mayor of San Francisco.) And he made a deal, in a sense, that once he got his new federal building built--this grand edifice is now in place over on Golden Gate and Larkin, I believe it is--Shelley said, "Okay," he'd find the funds to keep the mint and fix it up. He wanted the new federal building first as a kind of monument to his period in congress. That was fine with us, and that's the way it worked out in the end. But the old mint is still there, and it's a museum now. There was nothing terribly exciting about it to the public perhaps.

Landmarks Preservation

Riess: Was Shelley mayor when the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board was formed in 1967? That seems kind of late in San Francisco history to discover this notion of landmarks. Were you involved with that?

Newhall: When did Shelley go in? Do you know offhand?

Riess: Shelley went in in 1963.

Newhall: It was that late, okay. He succeeded Christopher.

And I think earlier I had said that I had not been able to get the Chronicle to come right out and support Shelley. I liked him because I knew him personally. I think he was quite a good man. I liked him very much. Charlie Raudebaugh, who had been an old Chronicle reporter--he was the one who wrote the articles about the Blue Gang, the San Francisco Police, that sort of put the Examiner on the defensive--Raudebaugh took a leave and handled Shelley's campaign. And they came in together.

I had a long talk with Jack then. I remember very well I dictated to Dolly Rhee, my secretary, a series of about six or seven

questions. I said, "Jack, look, it's not in the books for us to endorse an old Democratic warhorse like you in the editorial columns. But if you'll read this memorandum, it's about five or six or seven questions, and if you can answer yes to all of them we'll sure give you just the best possible play that we can." I think I may have mentioned this earlier.

Riess: Yes, you did.

Newhall: The list included, establishing a commission to study block by block every structure in San Francisco, to designate those which would be considered of historical or esthetic importance to the city of San Francisco. That was one. One of them was adopting a policy to knock down the freeway, and not to extend the freeways. Oh lord, they're all along that line.

Riess: Was the idea of landmarks preservation in the air at the time?

Newhall: Probably. We'd been pushing hard for it. But I'm not sure that the city itself had taken a position on it. You see, you had these little sort of ancillary semi-public groups like SPUR and maybe the Downtown Association fighting on one side to knock down everything--and the Chamber of Commerce trying to knock down everything, because they wanted to cover the city with Hilton Hotels, basically. I'm exaggerating a little, but not much. And we were fighting a lonely battle over all these years.

Templeton Peck, I don't know if I talked about him, he was head of our editorial page and was very active in keeping in touch with people who might try to save San Francisco for something more than an extra dollar on the hotel tax. There was another fight. Anyway.

Embarcadero Freeway

Newhall: George Christopher had been a good mayor. I talked about him. George is still around and I still admire him. He's, I think, about as honest a man as we've ever had in the City Hall. But George presided over the erection of the Embarcadero Freeway. (I'm jumping around, I appreciate that, but I'm going back to the Embarcadero Freeway because this was early in our preservation efforts, as I recall now.) I had felt very strongly, and we so editorialized at great length, "For god's sake, put the Embarcadero Freeway underground." "Don't put it above the ground, because," we said, "an elevated freeway around the waterfront will simply be a chastity belt around the city and nobody will be around to rape San Francisco anymore, like the tourists."

And George felt he owed us some sort of allegiance because we'd

been very supportive. So he got a citizen's committee, and Nate Owings was the spokesman. That was of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, who had put up some buildings in San Francisco. I think they had designed the American President Line Building and the Zellerbach Building and some of those that were really quite nice. Allan Temko was in full cry by this time and the Chronicle was banging away at the proposed freeway.

Well, we had some meetings in George Christopher's office--I haven't thought of this for a long time, but it was fairly interesting. The mayor agreed, "If you can persuade us that it is financially viable to put this freeway underground, if we can do it financially, we will certainly consider it and probably undertake that." Because we had to handle the state freeway people too, I think the Division of Highways. I think Barney Booker was the chief engineer for the State of California.

So there was a series of meetings. I remember the last one--I was going to say it was in the Ferry Building, but I forget, it may have even been in the mayor's office. Booker had come up--this is the chief engineer, and of course an engineer wants to build no matter what. He wants, you know, dollar for dollar and all that. He was a dull fellow but he was a very good engineer. And he made his presentation, why they had to put the freeway overground.

Owings was speaking for all the people in the white hats; he was the spokesman for the heroes. Here he was, this brilliant architect and critic, fighting for the angels. He got up and made a big pitch for putting it underground. You'll laugh at the figures, because I will not have them accurately, but they'll be close. Owings stated that for an added cost of two or three or four million dollars more we could put the Embarcadero Freeway underground. Now two or three or four million dollars today is nothing, I mean it is absolutely nothing.

Everybody was just delighted with all this. We thought, and the mayor thought, maybe we could do it. Except that at this point Booker got up in front of the group, in the front of the audience, and he turned to Nate Owings and he said, "Well, I have just one question. Have you figured in the cost of the relocation of the present utility lines in an underground freeway?"

There was this long silence, and Owings said, "No."

And then Booker said, "Well, do you think it would be fair to say this would cost six to nine million dollars more?" which was quite a lot of money then, and Owings said, "Yes, I guess that's reasonable." And that was the end. Over a lousy nine million dollars or something.

I still think today that Embarcadero Freeway is the worst

blight that San Francisco's ever suffered. And I've always taken the position the freeway was going to come down. I know I gave some interviews to BBC about that. We never quite made it, however. The freeway is still there, but at least we stopped it at Broadway. That was an end to that freeway after that. The original planned Embarcadero Freeway was designed to go all the way around San Francisco--from Mission Creek, past the Ferry Building, Telegraph Hill, past Ghirardelli Square, over the Marina, past the yacht harbors and Crissy Field and hook up with Golden Gate Bridge.

Now I have to go back one more step while I'm thinking back on the reason I got interested in the freeways and the physical impact of these terrible things on this most beautiful, precious gemstone of a city. I was worried about this Embarcadero Freeway and Karl Kortum had been nudging me. Karl, you know all about him. He came in, he said, "I have some pictures I want to show you." He had a series of pictures of the waterfront freeway in Seattle. And they were the most terrible, damning, damaging ugly pictures that one can look at. The photos were made on a rainy day and the cement was stained and all that. That freeway turned that part of Seattle into an instant slum. They were horrendous, these photographs of the Seattle freeway.

So we ran them in the Chronicle in the editorial page right across the top. And I forget who did the piece that went with it. Either I did it or Temko or Templeton Peck, I don't know. And that, I think, probably started off the city's awareness, the Chronicle's interest and push in terms of the encroaching environmental blight. And from then on it spread out to buildings, to bridges, to private structures, to signs over the buildings in the air, to the decor of Market Street and all sorts of things. It sort of went from there up to Twin Peaks, the big Twin Peaks antenna, which we could not stop. And I guess it's still going on. People are still fighting about too much highrise and so on in San Francisco. It's a very complex and involved fight still.

Tourist Town

Riess: And it sounds like you are ambivalent about the picture of San Francisco as a tourist paradise, and that really is its major income at this point. If you're setting it up to be a beautiful city for tourists and yet are revolted at the number of hotels--.

Newhall: Well, San Francisco pre-1950, I guess--not much began really in San Francisco until five or ten years after the war, and then it began to go, and then it finally exploded. But you know beauty, of course, is a very arbitrary thing. I guess no two esthetes are going to agree completely on what is good and what is bad and what

do the tourists want. I think the tourist trade in the city is the only thing that's kept the city alive, frankly. Some people might disagree with me.

We were the so-called financial center of California, or of the West, the Wall Street of the West. We were the tourist center of California, except for the sort of Hollywood affair. And we needed the tourists badly. So we couldn't turn this into another early Pittsburgh. (I don't say present-day Pittsburgh, because they've cleaned up their act very nicely back there on the whole.) Or another sort of slummy industrial Boston or something like that.

But what does a tourist come for? In New York, the greatest tourist attractions, of course, are the tall buildings, I would think, except for maybe the theater, something like that, the cultural side of it. Certainly not Grant's tomb or the Bronx Zoo, necessarily.

Riess: Well, it's not the waterfront of New York, even though New York is surrounded by water.

Newhall: The Hudson and the East River are not that much for the normal tourists. It's not thought of as important. But here--this used to be a seaport. San Francisco is, or was, the most beautiful port or harbor in the world. Of course, San Franciscans now, today, in 1988, I doubt that fifty percent of them have even seen the water and realize that it essentially was a port. I really mean that, quite almost seriously. There are vast groups within our city here who do not relate to San Francisco as a maritime city at all. Of course, we aren't very big in terms of physical trade and commerce anymore. All the maritime business has gone to Oakland.

Anyway, our waterfront used to be the most wonderful thing in the world. I think I mentioned that early on. There was nothing like it, my experience as a child on the old San Francisco waterfront. Now it's a sort of a laugh with the tour ships and an occasional navy ship coming in and out and that's it.

Riess: But you're saying that highrises are one of the attractions of some cities?

Newhall: Yes, well, I was going to get into it. I do not want to appear contradictory. I think highrises in their place, and if they're well-designed, are fantastic, they're magnificent. To me one of the most beautiful sights in the world is flying into San Francisco in the winter when the air is clear and you see this city rising up like a fairyland through the clouds. It's just breathtaking in its beauty. The highrises of San Francisco may be getting a little out of hand, all right, but it's very closely grouped, it's clumped. And I think, properly handled, towers just can be magnificent. I do think it's overdone a little here and there.

We mentioned earlier some of the buildings, the Bank of America, how they came up with a big highrise. I think the Transamerica Pyramid--hell, in one building those people have been able to come up with a San Francisco symbol equal to the cable cars or the Golden Gate Bridge.

Riess: So you accept the idea that San Francisco really is basically a tourist town.

Newhall: San Francisco has no reason for being a city. I think I said it all earlier. It's a state of mind, it's a legend, it's a fantasy. I mean, San Francisco, in terms of a city, is Disneyland now. It is not a working seaport anymore. It is not a coffee mill town. It's only partially the Wall Street of the West now. But people live here because they all like to live in the Land of Oz. When I say "they all," I mean a lot of these new people who've come into San Francisco and who are living within a mile or two of the highrise downtown clusters. I don't think most of them have ever been out beyond Twin Peaks or the Richmond or the Western Addition or anything.

The Waterfront

Riess: The tourists just hang out along the edges too.

Newhall: Yes, they've come to see this Potemkin village that in great part was a stage set masterminded by Karl Kortum.

Riess: Well, that's the educational part of it. Then there's Pier 39.

Newhall: Karl was a deadly enemy of Pier 39. But he lost.

Outside our window now, there's the Balclutha. They just moved it over last week.

Riess: Yes. How come?

Newhall: Well, that's where Karl wants it. There's been a big fight, but he won. And the National Park people have gone along with that, and so there's the Balclutha. I don't know what they're going to do about the box office. Here we are sitting here at this window in the Fontana Apartments and we can look out at the Balclutha, this three-masted sailing ship which has always been a tourist attraction. The old ship is now tied up at the end of the Hyde Street Pier, and I don't think that the public can get out there as easily as they did when it was tied up just below Fisherman's Wharf.

Riess: Is that the intention, to force the public to take a look at the

whole maritime history?

Newhall: They're going to sort of develop a new pattern for people who want to see that aspect of the waterfront, I suppose--I'm not an expert on this at all.

Riess: An expert on the Maritime Museum, the founding of it.

Newhall: Well, I don't know what an expert is.

How Karl Kortum Operates

Riess: Well, you're probably an expert on how Karl Kortum gets things done. Is this quote correct, that "in 1949 a Petaluma rancher named Karl Kortum came into your Chronicle offices and--"?

Newhall: That's the legend, and it's true, yes.

Riess: So Karl didn't have a base down here in 1949?

Newhall: No, no. He had been on board--look, it's all written down. I mean, there's the Kortum version of the history of San Francisco and it has to do with the fact that he's always loved ships. He had shipped on an old square-rigged sailing ship.

[telephone interruption]

Karl Kortum was the son of some sort of fairly active Democratic party farmer up in Petaluma. He came down to enlist the Chronicle in the fight against the freeway that was going to go through his family's chicken farm when they could have put it down below the hillside ranch in a marsh, which the highway engineers finally did. Karl won that one, because the Chronicle got on it pretty hard.

Karl was caught up in the glory of these big sailing ships, which we were all crazy about as kids. I remember we used to see them off Bolinas running under full sail from Bristol Bay in Alaska, the Star ships. We used to try to row out to them. My brother Hall was the same way. He and Karl happened to ship out together in World War II as crewmen on the Kaiulani, a three-masted bark. And Karl and my brother and some other kids from California, locally--those who are still alive--are still buddying around together.

Karl, through my brother, felt he knew me, and that's the way he came in to see me at the Chronicle, because my brother had told him I was also very hung up on ships. The old Star of Finland--the Kaiulani was the name that the Star of Finland sailed under just

before our entry into World War II--they sailed out, and while they were at sea we got into the war. They ended up in South Africa. My brother left there in Durban and Karl went on to Tasmania and Sydney with the ship and then stayed out in the Pacific for much of the war. My brother came home; he was torpedoed near Bermuda and spent a week in an open life boat--and so on and so forth.

Riess: This wasn't a working vessel, was it?

Newhall: Oh, yes. The Kaiulani was indeed a working vessel.

Riess: It really was?

Newhall: Oh, yes. You see, any hull at the beginning of the war was worth its weight in silver, if not gold. They threw a load of lumber onto her and sent her out to go around to South Africa. That's where they dumped a lot of their load, I believe. Why they would ship it there, I don't know. But anyway, there was all this salt water in Karl's blood and in my brother's blood and in my blood and others.

Karl came in to call on me on that basis, I guess, the night of the election of 1948--this was early now--when Harry Truman was running against our good friend Tom Dewey, a dull, pompous, boring little man. Everybody as you may recall, although you're not that old, I guess, figured Dewey was going to walk in there to the White House with no trouble at all. But, of course, Harry Truman won, much to the discomfiture of the crazy TV or radio personality, Kaltenborn. Do you remember that?

Riess: H.V. Kaltenborn, yes.

Newhall: We were listening to Kaltenborn there and Karl came in about in the middle of the Dewey disaster and asked me, or the Chronicle, "Please save Ely Hill," his goddamned chicken ranch in Petaluma. Truman just won hands down. Well, it was a funny evening for Karl, because I think I was probably the only guy on the Chronicle who had bet on Truman. I liked him and I was pretty sure he was going to win, so I bet what then for me was quite a lot of money on a Truman victory.

All the Chronicle owners, publishers, and their social friends had come by to celebrate at last a return to a good sound Republican administration following four terms of Roosevelt madness and insanity, you know. And my god, as the votes for Truman kept piling up, all the beautiful Republican people floated out so quietly and left, you know, when the returns really came in. Karl thought it was a bad night to really push anything, so he left his papers with me and went back to Petaluma. But from there on we helped Karl out and started working on the environmental problems and the freeways in Petaluma and it all ended up down here in the waterfront freeway and the rise of the Maritime Museum on the shores of San Francisco Bay here at the foot of Hyde Street at Aquatic Park.

Riess: He must have stayed very close to you during that period.

Newhall: Oh, we've been very close friends ever since.

Riess: I've read that you personally supervised wiring the Balclutha?

Newhall: Oh, sure. Look, Karl and I were very close personal friends. I enjoyed doing all kinds of things. I did quite a lot of work on the Maritime Museum, their exhibits and all the politics. Dave Nelson was in on it. I've mentioned him. He had been a Chronicle reporter. He became sort of a lobbyist and a public relations giant around town. There's a lot of stuff on record about all these relationships, and they're reasonably accurate. They have a certain flavor perhaps still of Petaluma, but nevertheless, they were reasonably accurate.

Karl really did function because of his ability to manipulate me and/or David or the Chronicle or people. He had a very important impact, I think, on the growth of the awareness of San Francisco's, the importance to San Francisco of its natural and perhaps man-made beauties. It sort of all went on from there.

Riess: Yes, well, aren't we talking about someone who's saved this waterfront area?

Newhall: I think he did. I think he deserves all the credit. [Karl Kortum, in reading the manuscript, noted that his wife Jean participated in the waterfront battles. See Appendices.]

Karl, he's sort of--well, you can see him as being in some other life a captain of industry, a munitions factory in Czechoslovakia or Germany or something. He's kind of Teutonic, a disciplinarian of sorts. He wants to discipline people into being undisciplined, I suppose. He has this picture in his mind of how the waterfront should look. He is able to bankrupt people by the sheer force of his vision. Somehow he can persuade bored and rich people to put their money up in the most preposterous Robin Hood, Nottingham Forest kind of deals, affairs. And people will go broke.

Riess: Case in point is the Eppleton Hall, I take it?

Newhall: Oh, that's one, it sure is.

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Newhall: Look, when it comes to saving or preserving maritime treasure, Karl Kortum is a pirate [laughing]. Karl has told me he would steal--I don't think he'd murder--he will steal, rob, cozen money out of people to achieve his aims. And as much as I love him, he has

achieve his aims. And as much as I love him, he has absolutely no sense of responsibility or no sense of guilt for literally bankrupting people.

San Francisco Maritime Museum

Riess: So once he got this notion, he gave up the chicken farming?

Newhall: Yes. He had this vision of a living maritime exhibit and museum down here in the Aquatic Park at the foot of Hyde.

Dave Nelson, Karl, and I worked very closely together. I participated then very actively. We had Hubert Buel, one of the Chronicle's artists and a good friend of mine, a Bohemian Club member and so on, draw up a sketch of the dream Karl had of this waterfront, with these piers that curve around the Aquatic Park lagoon at which we're looking right now. Hubert drew those up in the early fifties, I think very early fifties And it's interesting that today the scene is so close to what that sketch in the early fifties looked like that it's almost breathtaking, it's shocking. We called it Project X and we got the three or four papers to come along on it, at least not to block it. We didn't want the Maritime Museum to be killed in an inter-newspaper battle.

Riess: How did you arrange something like that?

Newhall: At that time I was still Sunday editor, so it was probably about '50 or '51. Paul Smith was still our executive editor, and I wrote him some memos and he said, "Okay, go along, do what you can."

I got Clarence Linder, who was the publisher of the Examiner, and Randolph Heearst at the Call-Bulletin, and whoever was the publisher of the News at that time. It was probably Joe Cauthorn. And I even got old fearless Will Chapin, W.W. Chapin, the editor of the Argonaut. We all went to lunch up at the Bohemian Club in a private room. All the papers were represented. I said, "Look, we don't want a maritime museum for the Chronicle. Let's just have this for a community deal. If you don't like it, at least don't knock it, don't fight it." And they said okay. They were very nice about it.

Dave and Karl were basically the pair of plotters then. Elmer Robinson was still mayor at that time. They were able to go in and get Elmer Robinson to say, "Okay, we'll sort of support it as long as it doesn't call for any city money." And we said, "No, we're not

going to cost you any money." Well, in the end the city did pay half of Karl's salary, but the city's cost was always minimal. The museum was financed almost entirely by volunteer money and volunteer labor.

But it was a pretty interesting story, actually. Karl was broke then, he was just getting married. Some girl came in and wanted a job on the Chronicle and I sent her down to see if she wanted to help get the museum started. See, the city owned the Aquatic Park building right here, and that was the center for the museum. They were out begging, borrowing and stealing things and getting ship artifacts and all that. So Jeannie went down as a sort of a volunteer secretary in the top little office where Karl still is.

They got married, and they had a baby, and the baby used to go down there and live in a basket, I remember that. Karl had nowhere to live, so Alma Spreckels, this old doll who was, you know, a nice woman, strange in a way, she had this quite big Italianate mansion out toward Pacific Heights. The chauffeur's quarters in the Spreckels palace were down below between Washington and Jackson. So Alma let Karl and Jeannie--I think they were married then--live in the basement where the chauffeur's quarters were.

I remember one of my fondest memories of the whole thing was we had a stag party and we had dirty films, what now are called X-rated movies, in Alma's basement. I guess if she knew what was going on she would have died--possibly have joined the party--but anyway, we were not raided. That was a very, very bad offense at that time.

Alma had put a lot of money into this. Karl would get these angels, and as soon s they were out of money he would discard them. And I don't mind saying that, because I don't think he'd deny it.

Riess: He didn't put them on a board, he didn't make a board out of all these people?

Newhall: No, he didn't want Alma to bother him. As I say, Karl ran this thing very much as you would expect Chancellor von Bismarck to run a museum. Karl is still dedicated and he's still fighting the world.

Riess: How was it funded then? Privately, mostly?

Newhall: Yes. Alma put up some money and we all did what little we could. You know, nobody had much money then. But we got the Balclutha, we were able to borrow money. There was a board we sort of put together, a hand-picked board of the museum, about eleven or twenty-one board members. And they were people around town. I think one of the Hellmans from the Wells Fargo Bank was on the board. Don Watson and Eddie Harms, John Cushing--these were all guys in the

maritime community with the steamship companies. We all jointly signed a note for $20,000. I think there were twenty of us. Gee, that was a lot of money then. And that was enough money for us to buy the ship. Karl and Dave went on and finally made a deal to buy the Balclutha.

Then we had a big drive around town--when I say, "we," this was the board of the Maritime Museum. There was publicity for this because the city had endorsed the idea and the four papers would run stories. We got volunteer workers from the unions and from the maritime industry to put up stuff, and do shipyard work free, and so on and so forth. We restored the Balclutha and got her on display [1955]. Then we lived off the box office at the Balclutha for years. It was always from hand to mouth.

Finally, after many years and all these other adventures, the then board of trustees of the museum turned over the project to the National Park Service. This was Karl's doing again. Burton had put up his bill for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Karl wanted to get his fleet of old ships up to the federal trough. And only one person on the board voted to not give it to the government, and that was I. I didn't like it. I said, "Karl, you're going to get lost. You think you've got trouble with your board of directors. Wait until you get in there with the federal government. You're just going to be another one of these brown shirt, Smokey the Bear deals."

Riess: Yes, and he felt that way too, didn't he?

Newhall: Well, he denied it at first and plunged ahead into the National Park Service. And man, he has had the most horrible life ever since on account of it. I just pulled out basically because--. It always happens that way. Karl does not tend to listen too much at times. Sometimes he does. So now the last ten years of the Maritime Museum has been nothing but horrible pushing and hauling and shoving between Karl and the poor fellows of the National Park Department. The National Park Service doesn't take to having prima donnas.

Riess: To having Bismarck working under them!

Newhall: That's right. It was tough on both sides, and too long a battle to go into in any depth about. But Karl came out on top in 1989.

Riess: The Maritime Museum building was here before?

Newhall: The Maritime Museum building was built in the 1930s. It's decorated with murals, you know, I think by Hilaire Hiler. It was one of those WPA projects, and I think it's a marvelous one. It sort of looks like a cross between a wedding cake and the navigating bridge of the Matsonia or the Lurline. I don't know exactly what it is. And Karl's office is right up in that little blockhouse on the top.

The Eppleton Hall

Riess: Bringing the Eppleton Hall to San Francisco, was that his idea first, or your idea?

Newhall: The Eppleton Hall started when Karl and I went out to dinner. We still go out to dinner once a month or so.

Riess: Does something start every time you go out to dinner?

Newhall: God forbid! But he had a copy of Sea Breezes, which is a very respectable, reputable shipping, seafaring magazine, mostly for sailing people. And there was a little story about the Old Trafford, which is the Reliant under another name, the last of the paddle-wheel towboats from up there on the North Sea, Sunderland or Newcastle. The story told how the Reliant was being bought by the museum at Greenwich-on-the-Thames in London. And it had a picture of it. It looked very much like the little paddle-boat that was used by David Niven in Around the World in Eighty Days, or sixty days, whatever that was. And it appealed to me.

Karl said, "This is terrible. They're going to chop this thing up. That's not good museum work at all." He said, or I said, "Well, let's go over and get it and bring it back."

Well, it's a very involved story, what happened after that. I told all about it in a book I wrote. [The Eppleton-Hall, Howell-North Books, 1971.]

Riess: But you weren't dragged into that.

Newhall: Oh no, look, I said, man, that's for me. Here I will be Captain Bligh or Captain Ahab or whatever on board this towboat and we'll bring it over. Because I figured nobody could bring a hundred-foot paddle steamer over anymore. So we went off and did it. Everybody said, you know, we never could make it. So I guess that's why we did it, I don't know. But I covered it as exhaustively as I could in a few hundred pages in that book.

Collecting Automobiles

Riess: You've also succumbed to an urge to collect old cars, haven't you?

Newhall: Since a child I've always been a collector. And I can't explain that. When I was a child on Bolinas Beach I used to walk up and down the beach like a beachcomber when I was probably seven or eight. And the first thing I collected as I recall were whiskey

bottles, those glass half-pint bottles, because these were the days of Prohibition and a lot of bootlegging and rum-running was done off the coast here. I think they used to throw the stuff overboard and it would wash in. Some of them would be half full of whiskey and I would throw it out. I hadn't learned yet what fine stuff it was.

As a child I know I used to collect those things on the beach. I hadn't thought about that until recently, as a matter of fact. I had quite a huge hoard. My mother went crazy. She made me put them downstairs. I just put them in a bin sort of underneath in the dirt. I think maybe somebody went down and broke them all or something, I don't know. But anyway, I used to collect them.

And then I do remember I collected cigar bands. I used to roam the sidewalks and the gutters of San Rafael and look for cigar bands. Cigar bands then were very common; lots of people smoked cigars. I remember El Roi Tan and wonderful old Cuban names and so on. I used to paste them up in books the way people had stamp collections. I don't know what became of my priceless collection of cigar bands, White Owls. Anyway, I could have called off at one time twenty or thirty or a hundred of them.

Then I collected coins, and of course postage stamps. My father and uncle used to collect postage stamps and I remember towards the end when things had gone bad and everyone had lost most of their money my father and my Uncle Edwin would sit up at night trading postage stamps. They had rather elaborate collections. I finally sold my postage stamp collection.

Then the next thing I really got into, I guess it was coins and cars. I've always loved automobiles. I am not by any means a genius in the area of the internal combustion engine, but nevertheless I loved them. They just have played such an important part in my life, all my life. I remember in San Rafael you had to wait till you were fourteen until you could get a driver's license. But you didn't need a license to drive a motorcycle. I think the first internal combustion machine I ever had--well, no, we had the motor wheels, Smith Motor Wheels, or Briggs and Stratton wheels, we used to call them buckboards. They were little sort of carts on slats. Then they'd have a fifth wheel behind, a wheel with a motor to push the contraption along the road. I don't know if you've ever seen one or not.

Riess: No.

Newhall: You could lift up the motor wheel and take it off the ground, then you wouldn't go. They're like outboards, very similar to outboards. The same people make all these little gasoline engines. We used to go all over town in those when we were young, ten years old maybe.

Then I bought a couple of motorcycles. I remember I bought one

for $11. I had a problem with my mother about that. I hadn't got a license yet. I guess I was about twelve then. Later I bought a Cleveland automobile for $35.

Riess: You had your own money?

Newhall: Well, I had $35. I guess I saved it or something. I didn't have all that much money, I really didn't. But my mother made me take it back. I remember one of our house boys had bought a Harley-Davidson, a little one. And he drove it up to the house, a Filipino house boy. And he skidded on the gravel and skinned up his knee. I remember he kicked the brand-new little Harley-Davidson. He said to it, "I'm never going to ride you again!"

I said, "Well, gee, what are you going to do with it?" Pablo, his name was. He said, "You can have it. Here, give me $5 and you can have it." Hell, it was worth probably $100 or $200!

Riess: That's just like the story of the horse, isn't it?

Newhall: Exactly the way I got my first good motorcycle. And of course, my parents took that away from me.

Then I went down and bought the $11 motorcycle and I was on my way out to the Marin Golf and Country Club or the Yacht Club out there in San Rafael, and the connecting rod went through the crank case, so I left it there. But our chauffeur, he gave me a buck for that one. It was an old single-speed four-cylinder Henderson motor bike.

It just sort of grew from there. My father and mother gave me some Model-A Fords. I was fourteen, I had a license then. Then when Ruth and I were married we started out--you know, we were broke then--we started out with Model-T Fords. They were old by this time. This was about '33 and '34. The Model T's went out of business in '27. We paid $12.50 for our first car together, a Model-T roadster. But it had no top. So then when the winter came we turned that in for $10 and then for another $5 we got a Model-T roadster with a top on it. Now, these things were a mess. I mean, they were worth about $15.

From there on up we've had, I'm sure, hundreds and hundreds of cars. Because I've always loved to work on them. My father--my brother Almer was a great mechanic, an engineer. He became an engineer at MIT.

Restoring Automobiles

Riess: But at some point you stopped trading them and started just collecting them?

Newhall: Well, I collected them in order to restore them. Some people collect them for some reason or other, just to have them. And we all have that collecting instinct in us to a certain extent. That's what I do with silver coins or American colonial furniture or Georgian silver, I guess.

When you're young and the world comes to an end financially, and the era of Rudolph Valentino ends, and everybody sort of goes broke, you remember watching those big sixteen-cylinder Cadillac convertibles come by and the Rolls-Royces with Fay Wray or Bebe Daniels in them. You see the beautiful people in beautiful cars come by, and you think, "Gee, wouldn't that be wonderful?" Well, during World War II cars that were old and ate a lot of gasoline were a drug on the market. And I remember I got a Locomobile and a friend of mine had an Isotta-Fraschini. This was before so-called "classic cars" became so expensive, and you could get an old Packard limousine for seventy-five bucks.

Riess: What was that other name?

Newhall: Isotta-Fraschini. It's an Italian car, I think maybe Italian, Spanish, something like that. In another case there was the Hispano-Suiza. Zoe Akins, a famous writer and Hollywood celebrity, was an aunt of somebody who had married a cousin of mine. She was a Hollywood character and she had a big Hispano-Suiza town car. It ended up on a Pasadena car lot for $75. I got Remsen Bird, who was the president of Occidental College down there, I said, "Hey, Uncle Birdie, go out and get this car!" So he went running out there to the car lot but it had been sold, unfortunately, to a college fraternity house. I never did get that one.

So then I got interested--and how did I really start working on them? I had a pretty good shop. I was working at the Chronicle all this time. (I'm jumping way ahead. I won't spend too much time on this car business.) But this was abut 1953. I remember I had just bought a brand new couple of Lincoln Capris--they were the 1953 model then. And I drove into this old ship chandler's shop down by the San Francisco waterfront. The old guy behind the counter looked at my fancy new Capri and said, "Well, I've got a Lincoln, but it's older than that." I said, "What is it?" He said, "Oh, it's a 1931 Lincoln sedan, a wonderful car. But I can't drive it anymore. I've got a bad heart. I want to get rid of it. I'll sell it to you." I said, "Well, I can't afford it." He said, "Look, you can have it for $100."

I said, "Look, I'll buy anything for $100!" I didn't really have $100 then, but anyway I went out and got this old Lincoln. There underneath a regular little house out in the Sunset, it was parked on flat tires, in his basement. I pumped up the tires--Ruth came out with me--put a new battery in it, fired it up, and she drove off. This was in about '53 and I doubt if he'd driven that thing for ten or fifteen years. So this episode started me in again on some of these big old cars. This old Lincoln was in good shape. I got it painted and did some of the work and had it upholstered. And there was a con rod, a connecting rod burned out on it. But I was able to have the bearing reground in place, in situ.

Packard Super-8, and Successors

Newhall: Then somehow I got interested in the Concours d'elegance at Pebble Beach. They accepted my car to show it. I don't think I won anything that year with the old Lincoln, but I went down. And I had a lot of fun with it. A Pebble Beach weekend is a fine way to pass some time if you've got a lot of headaches back in the office.

From then on people knew I was sort of interested in cars and they'd come and tell me about one old car or another. A fellow in the Chronicle came in, one of our reporters, and said, "Hey, this old Chinese guy's got a Packard up on Sacramento Street in San Francisco in his garage and he wants to get rid of it." And I said, "Look, I'm not interested. I've got this darn Lincoln here and I'm having enough problems with that." He said, "Well, go take a look."

So I went up, and there was this thing kind of in pieces. But it was a big old Packard roadster Super-8, 1930. All the parts were there. Now, the car was a mess, I mean, a wreck. But this Chinese guy said, "You can have it." I said, "Well, why? What do you mean?" He said, "I don't know. It was here when I bought the house." And I said "Well, why don't you tell somebody?" He said, "I don't want to get involved with any authorities." Well, I think he may have been fresh off the boat. I don't know, he probably was illegal. I really don't know. I said, "I can't do that. I don't want it," and I really didn't. He said, "Please." So I said, "Well look, I'll give you $75 if you want." He said, "Fine."

But then I didn't want to get it out on the street until I got the car legal. So Dolly went down and talked to some guys in the DMV, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and they said, "Well now, something like this car with no pink slip, you have to advertise it, and you have to tack a sign on the door of the garage where it is because this gives people a chance to come by and bid on it." Dolly said, "Okay, that's fine." And she started out. And he said, "Just a minute, miss." She said, "Yes." He said, "You'd better read the

code about this." And she said, "Why?" He said, "Well, the code doesn't say which side of the door you have to tack the notice on." [laughter] That was all. So we tacked the sign on the inside of the door--you know, for ten days or something.

We towed it away and got it fired up down at the Chronicle garage and I got it home. And it was an absolutely gorgeous car, in its way. I think it had quite a lot of style, rumble seat and all that. I got it home to Berkeley, and I decided I would restore it. I was working hard on it. I would get up in the morning about 6:00 and I would work on this car. I did all the body work, everything except the chromium and the leather, the interior upholstery.

Halfway through it I had a heart attack. I remember that. That's when I had a little coronary. When I got home and got back from the hospital six weeks later, I slowly went back on that Packard. I did the whole thing myself, the paint--everything but the upholstery and the chrome.

Riess: Just from the manual?

Newhall: Yes, you can get manuals. It was pretty accurate all right. We did the mechanical work on it and restored it and painted it and so on and so forth.

I got it down to Pebble Beach to show, and for some reason or other one of the most exciting moments in my life was when I won the grand prize. Absolute total grand prize of the whole Pebble Beach show, which was a great honor for me.

From that point on I used to try to buy cars. I never bought a car for more than $1,200 and that was an old Rolls-Royce. This was quite early on. You know they're very big and stylish now. I'll get into that. But I had this beautiful Rolls Regent convertible coupe, 1929. There was a 1929 dual-cowl Stutz, the big one. And a big old 1932 Chrysler Custom Imperial Le Baron I found in a yard down in Los Angeles. That's a very desirable car. These were all touring cars or convertible sports cars, but great big huge so-called classic cars. I had a 1929 front wheel drive-L'29 Cord convertible that I paid $350 for. And the McFarland I got from Bill Harrah, a big town car. I never saw one like it.

Riess: Yes, I wondered if you by that time were buddies with him?

Newhall: Yes, we were pretty good buddies. He sold me the car for what he paid for it, which was $500. It was the most elaborate, big tank of a star car. He bought it off the Warner Brothers' lot. You know, one of these old town cars that the stars were driven in to movie premiers and that kind of thing. I think it belonged to Bebe Daniels or someone like that. I sold the McFarland back to Harrah for whatever I put in. I think I bought probably $1,000 or $2,000

worth of parts for it and then sold it back.

Riess: Is he the kind of guy who also works on things himself, or did he always have it done?

Newhall: Not so much himself. But he was very knowledgeable, he really was knowledgeable. I don't know how good a mechanic he was, but he knew cars. I liked him, I always did. He was a very honest man. He'd been an alcoholic but he cut that out. So he went into cars the same way I did.

I know one year Bill Harrah and Jack Nethercutt--he's a very rich guy who has this cosmetic company, Merle Norman cosmetics, a big company down in Los Angeles up there in Sylmar--he and I and Bill ended up at the Indianapolis Memorial Day race one year. We were there together. And every one of us was a reformed drunk. I'll never forget that. Nobody was drinking. And of course in Indianapolis in those days on Sundays and holidays Indiana was a dry state, you couldn't get a drink. But Nethercutt said he was going to drink a little beer. So he hired a limousine, I didn't know where the hell he got it, to get us to the races and back. As it turned out, it belonged to the local mortician there. It was the fancy car for the chief mourners at a funeral. The fellow was selling beer in his back kitchen. [laughs] I don't know, it's an involved story.

But anyway, we had a lot of fun with these cars. People have their hobbies. Some people I guess collect movie star dresses, some people collect coins, which I did for a long time. So I had all these cars. I gradually sold them all out because it was turning from a hobby into a money business and I didn't want any part of it.

Riess: Because they had such an increasing value?

Newhall: Yes, they did. And you see, people who did not know anything about cars were beginning to buy them purely for status, the way somebody now gets himself a big fancy Mercedes or BMW or Aston-Martin or some Lagonda--I guess they don't make Lagondas anymore.

Mercedes Benz##

Newhall: The last car that I really fixed up, and it broke my back, was a big old Mercedes Benz from Germany. I bought it from the estate of Charlie Crocker, one of the Crocker family here in town, down in Pebble Beach. I paid $1,000 for it. It was a one-of-a-kind, a custom-made car for the Paris Automobile Exposition in 1935. It was a very fancy, four-seat convertible, I guess coupe, but it had four seats anyway. Convertible Victoria, or something. Very fancy, very

custom-made. It took me three years to restore that. I hired Tony, my son, and each one of those three years I hired somebody over the summer just to clean it up and so on. And Ruth did a lot of work on that car.

Riess: Really? She'd get in there?

Newhall: Oh, yes, she did. She painted a good part of it. It was quite a car. It was unusual. It was a big lumbering truck, super-charged, very fancy, with the big chrome pipes coming out. These were my childhood dreams coming back to roost.

We fixed the Mercedes up. I remember I did a job on that. Nobody will ever know how much of that is genuine and how much of it is fake, because this car was custom-made, one of a kind, and you could do anything you wanted with it. And I actually had cast and made the hardware, the hinges and the handles and the stuff like that, because I didn't like what the French bodymakers had put on it originally. These cars, believe it or not, when they make one for display at something like the Paris Exposition, a custom car, they are all a mock-up almost. Some of these show cars are not all that well-made because they are built in a hurry. I said no, I've got to do this better. It had a French body on it by Saoutchik. It was pretty much an art deco design. I said it's got to be more Teutonic.

We ran it down to Pebble Beach for the show, and it took first in the class all right, but it didn't take first in the show and it should have. It was one of the two finalists. I was so disappointed. They gave the grand prize to a nice right out-of-the-shop old SS Mercedes or Jag, a speedster, kind of. And the Saoutchik Mercedes was far more unusual, far more elegant. It was a much bigger job. But it didn't win the show, it won the class.

I sold the Mercedes that night to a friend of mine. And I had sold the Packard to another friend, too. Because once you fix up these cars, if you can't use them enough, they're going to deteriorate, they're just going to rust. They're going to get rotten. So I would sell them literally for really less money than I had in them. I think I sold the Packard for $7,500, or maybe $8,500. I sold this Mercedes--the reason I mention prices, you'll see why--I sold the Mercedes for I think it was $11,000 or $12,000. And I'm sure I must have had $20,00 anyway in it. But I sold them to friends of mine.

Well, the last time not my old Mercedes but a stock Mercedes of that year changed hands, in that condition, it brought about $600,000 at auction. That's a few months ago. So you can see what's happened. And it's taken all the fun out of it. That thing I sold, I'm sure if I just went and put it on the auction, it would probably bring a million dollars, I really do. Classic cars are

very stylish, they are big money now. It was very unusual, very. Oh, and my friend young Charlie Crocker is sick that the family didn't keep his father's car. I'm sorry I can't give it back to him.

Chrysler 300D

Newhall: Let me finish off this thing about the cars, just very briefly. I subscribe every now and then to some auto publications, the advertisements, class ads in the papers. And about twenty years ago I had a nice car, two or three of them one time, as a matter of fact. They were Chrysler 300Ds or 300Cs--1957-58. I always loved them because they were big, fast and powerful. And about a year and a half ago I saw one advertised. Well, it was a basket case. They wanted $2,000 for it. And that's the Chrysler with the huge fins like this, big fins, the biggest fins of the lot.

I bought it, had the fellow bring it home down south there in a trailer. I thought, boy, I've got one more restoration in me. It took me about a year-and-a-half because I sort of got sick in between, but I restored this Chrysler. So now that's what I drive around, that Chrysler. I can't think of anything more vulgar than a Chrysler 300D, but it was a very snappy car in its day.

Now those cars of the fifties--I've usually been ahead of my time in this stuff--are becoming very big. They're bringing prices. People are leaving signs on them: "I will buy your car." The Japanese are really going in big for these American cars with the fins. You see, after all, that car's thirty years old.

Riess: They want to take them back to Japan?

Newhall: Yes, people go around and buy them. These darned cars--I could probably get $15,000, $20,000, $25,000 for it now if I wanted to, because it's all cleaned up. And it cost me quite a bit to do it, you know, on upholstery alone. Cars are an amazing part of the human race today. They still are. Can you imagine these Japanese guys, this tall, getting in a car a hundred feet long. I tell you, it's something.

Anyway, I still have that car, and I still go around, and I hope it will run for a while. I bought two more just the other day for parts. So that's the end of my story with the cars.

Riess: What color is the one you have?

Newhall: I wouldn't go for a stock color. You're supposed to be a purist, you know, but I figure that the factory doesn't know everything.

Perhaps my taste is just as good as Mr. Iacocca's ancestors. This one is a very dark gunmetal gray, sort of a two-tone dark gunmetal gray. And the purists insist upon restoring their cars exactly the way the factory did. Oh, they hate people to violate sanctity. I just look at them and say, "Come on, this is the way it should have been done."

The Fun Of It All

With that Mercedes I was telling you about, I had made a gold St. Christopher embedded in a beautiful green jade box frame for the dash panel. The gear shift on it is a beautiful piece of jade. I mean, that Mercedes is really gussied up. It was never done that way. And in my machine shop I made all the parts and accessories and the stuff up in the engine compartment. The generator cover was all turned and chromed. And I designed and turned these pots for the lubrication and brake fluids, and I turned those and I machined them all. (As I say, I've got a pretty good shop.) And then I had them all engraved "made by Zeiss" or "by the Kruppwerke." Nobody will know where the truth ends and the fiction begins.

Riess: Is the person who owns it privy to all of the fiction?

Newhall: I don't think he'd understand it. The man to whom I sold it at first is a good friend of mine, but he sold it to another collector. The last time it sold, it sold for about a quarter of a million. I met the latest owner, but he knows nothing about cars, nothing, and he's just letting it sit there, deteriorate. He's crazy.

Riess: You drove your cars as well as showing them?

Newhall: All of them, after restoring them. I remember the Packard, the year it won the grand prize Tony was driving it home for me from Pebble Beach and it caught fire. The engine went up and it destroyed the hood. But I was able to fix it up again.

The cars, we used to tour in them once in a while. It was great fun because some of the fellows were just great, they really were, and they still are, some of them. But now the amounts of money involved in these winning cars, at Pebble Beach for example, it's incomprehensible. They sold this big Bugatti Royale--of course, there are only six in the world, the Bugatti Royales--the latest one sold I think for four-and-a-half million dollars or something like that. And it's the lousiest car that's ever been built. You can't really run it on the road, it doesn't have decent steering or anything. But the guy's gotta have it! You know, you've got all this Arab money, you've got all this Japanese money, and so on.

Anyway, one day I had a little old beautiful six-cylinder Packard roadster. I got it here in San Francisco from the widow of a bootlegger. She was kind of bonkers by this time, and I paid her $371 or something for it. She went into tears when I towed it out. But it was a very sound car. (When I talk about these cars, this means anything from a skeleton up to a finished car.) I was going to restore that one because it was a little Packard, and I think it would have done very well against some of the big elaborate cars if I had really done a good restoration job on it, really made it shine like a true gem. But I was down by this time in Piru and Newhall. We were working on the Signal, I was working on the Chronicle, we were trying to restore the house in Piru, and I had too much to do.

So I called, Dolly actually, called Bill Harrah and said, "Hey, do you want this little Packard?" And she described it on the phone. I threw in a couple of race engines I had for our dragsters. (I had been drag racing all this time, too.) But anyway, for $7,500 I sold him this little Packard, and it was worth it, it was a bargain. And I took the $7,500 and I went down to Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. My friend David Orgell has a big silver shop down there, and I gave him the $7,500 for a big Paul Storr candelabrum, which is a very fancy piece of Georgian silver. And I suppose that's when I went from cars into Georgian silver.

To finish off. As I say, there are so many cars I have been involved with. But the fun of it--like the cigar bands or the arrowheads, and I forgot to mention the arrowheads, but anyway the cigar bands and the whiskey bottles--is to find them. It's so exciting to find a little $300 Packard roadster, or a $75 Lincoln, or a $1,000 Rolls-Royce, in a barn or a junkyard or somewhere. I just enjoy it.

Riess: It wasn't the value.

Newhall: No, it's the fun of finding it. I don't care what it is you collect. You know, for years Ruth and I would go out every weekend to the Humboldt Sink up in Nevada looking for arrowheads, just for the fun of finding them. We'd find eight or ten each trip, sometimes many more. We ended up with quite a collection, which also disappeared in the fire at the Piru mansion. But there is something beautiful about real Indian arrowheads, something exciting, and all the history. The University of California, as a matter of fact, has a paper on the collection we had, somewhere. Bob Heizer in the anthropology department put it together.

Collecting Coins

Newhall: Then I got into Georgian silver, and the coins. We used to travel quite a bit and I used to like to have a reason to travel. So whenever I go traveling now I do go to the silver shops just for the hell of it.

I used to go to coin shops looking for Mexican coins. I was basically interested only in one type of Mexican coin. It was the most common, ordinary coin, in a sense, ever minted in Mexico. It was the eight real piece with the Liberty cap on one side and the eagle on the other--it was the size of an American silver dollar. This coin was called "a dollar Mex" and you could get them for fifty cents apiece. A Mexican dollar, same silver, better silver, cost you fifty cents. This was one type. And I'll show you one before you go.

I think I got together eventually from here and there and watching the auctions and the dealers--you know, you meet all kinds of people in all this--I probably had easily the best collection of this particular type of coin in the world. I finally filled in all the holes, the entire list, by date and mint marks. I had them all but two.

You see, from 1824 to 1908, basically, these eight real Mexican dollars were turned out at eleven different mints in Mexico. So you have all these date years and all these mints. You see what I mean?

Riess: Oh, fun, yes!

Newhall: I love Mexico, and some of the mints were in the most delightful places, and some of them are horrid. In Mexico, Ruth and I had many experiences in which these particular coins were involved. They had stopped making them in 1908, about, but the people out in the rural countryside of Mexico where we used to ride would still use these old silver pesos for their real exchange. We ran into some of these in memorable circumstances, when we were hungry and so on. So I just somehow got interested in them because I could buy them cheaply in the beginning.

When I say the beginning, up to about 1965 I could buy them for less than a dollar apiece. I'd just keep watching the dates and so on. But then pretty soon you get into the rare ones, and the last --oh, I was paying five, six, seven, ten thousand dollars apiece for them in the end. I felt that was a little bit heavy. I finally really completed it, with two exceptions, and then I sold them all to a dealer I had done a lot of business with.

Riess: At a profit, surely.

Newhall: I don't think so, but not at a loss. I won't say a profit because I paid an awful lot for them. But the fun I got out of it, you can't repay that.

Then when I finished and sold them all, along came another dealer and he talked me into buying one of the two coins I didn't have. There are only two of this particular mint and vintage known, one of each date known in the world. I've still got one of them. I can't sell it. I said, "Well, I'll buy it if you want." I didn't have enough money for it, but I bought it anyway. And I just sort of laughed. I sold the whole collection for what I had in them, honestly, maybe a few thousand dollars more or a few thousand dollars less, I just don't know. I never did tabulate it. I didn't care. I knew about what it was worth.

Riess: What are coin collectors like?

Newhall: Coin people are a strange lot. But I think the flakiest lot of all collectors are those people who collect dolls. I am not really in with that, but I heard a story about it just the other day. There's apparently an emotional content to collecting dolls that one can't believe. Now why I'm mentioning dolls, I don't know, but I was fascinated.

But coin collecting people, for example, sometimes tend to be a rather squirrelly, more miserly group of citizens. They come from basically a very different cut of society. King Farouk of Egypt was a coin collector, and maybe Queen Elizabeth and some very rich Americans used to collect coins. But the run-of-the-show coin collectors and dealers frequently just sit around and trade their coins, or save them. They can be a very squirrelly lot. They go around looking for very valuable coins that for a dollar or two they can buy from a tray with a lot of assorted coins on it. They tend to be--I don't want to use the word "miserly"--there is a funny acquisitive instinct about them. They will just as soon tell the truth as not about where some coin came from, what it's worth or what it is or so on. Coins have a very fascinating history.

You do have a group of coin collectors who are very wealthy and who are still acquisitive; they're still collectors, but they're different from the great mass who are there, you know, huddled over a whole bunch of coins in a case. They have these shows and so on, exhibitions every now and then. They're very different.

I ran into Amon Carter, Jr., one of those Texans, and he has a lot of money--his father I think owned the old Fort Worth Star Telegram. Young Amon, who just died, he used to collect more or less the same type Mexican coins that I did. He was one, and there were two or three others that sort of you'd get on with. They had some very fancy ones. King Farouk was probably the world's best-known coin collector, and he's probably one of the world's most

undesirable benchmates, I don't know.

Riess: Can you call yourself a numismatist? Or is that a more scholarly term?

Newhall: Well, it's a longer name for a coin collector. They all have the same urge I think, and I cannot describe it. Coins are tied in with life and death. A coin is a very emotional thing. I absolutely love them. Oh, I still have hundreds, but not in this Mexican collection.

Riess: And in a way you probably could say what anyone will assume from all of this, that it is the history that you love.

Newhall: I learned my geography from stamp collecting, literally. The world has changed now, Montenegro is no longer here, nor Bosnia nor Herzegovina. But it's the way you learn things. From coin collecting I've met people from all over the world. And in cars, too, particularly if you're back and forth across the continent. I think part of it has just been for the sheer social pleasure of meeting people and consorting with them.

I have hundreds of coins still, but only a few of them are very valuable. Most of them are based on Latin America and this country and the British colonial world, because this is my fantasy. I don't know, I can't explain it. I love Latin America, I love the British colonial thing, and I refuse to let it go, which is why I feel that we shall have to return someday to the British raj and the white man's burden. But at the moment I cannot see this as a very practical concept.

Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company

Riess: In the meantime you send out greeting cards reminding us of Christmas in Burma and a shipping company down on the Irrawaddy river.

Newhall: Well, all right, all right, you nailed me there, you're right. That's my life. And people will say "Hey what about this? What is this Christmas card all about?"

"Well it's an old family company, you know." Actually for many, many years Ruth and I have sent out Christmas cards to all our friends. These greetings are always complete with various exotic illustrations. The Christmas greeting is always composed as a kind of annual report on the ancient or contemporary status of some nebulous, venerable family enterprise called the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company.

Riess: The Irrawaddy?

Newhall: Yes. You know, there's always an Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company somewhere, isn't there?

Riess: You're quoting yourself. That's exactly what you said to another interviewer who asked you about that.

Newhall: That was John Luce's interview, I think. [San Francisco Magazine, July-August 1968].

Riess: Yes. That's an awfully question-for-question answer.

Newhall: I'm afraid the Irrawaddy steam company has gained a certain amount of notoriety among our friends, particularly around Christmas time. Every so often a friend will come up and he'll say, "Gee, what about this Christmas card? Is there really such a steamship company?" Well, to my horror I did discover, a few years ago, there actually used to be something called the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. And they published a book about their experiences on the Irrawaddy, and it is difficult for some people to tell them apart. So that has made the saga of our own Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company a most elaborate and even more mysterious affair. I'm sorry, but it's very confusing.

Riess: You mean the fiction and the fact?

Newhall: Yes, fiction and fact. I'm not even sure. You know, there have always been old river boats on the Irrawaddy. But I won't say there's any fiction with any of it. How much of life is fiction? I don't know. But I promise no one can cleave fact from fiction in the end. How much of George Washington is fact? How much of Washington is fiction? Where do fiction and fact separate in the cases of Cleopatra and Anthony, the siege of Troy and the Wooden Horse? How did Moses part the Red Sea? Was Ronald Reagan an American president or a Hollywood actor? I mean, in terms of the psyches of the American people. I don't know.

Fiction and Fact and Playing Roles

Riess: Well, then, people can turn that around and ask how much of the Chronicle was fact and how much of it was fiction.

Newhall: I will accept any appraisal on that. How much of Reagan is fact and how much is fiction? How much of the USSR is fact and how much is fiction? How much of Afghanistan is fact and how much is fiction? Perhaps if you can explain to me today why the American people will sit passively by and pour billions of dollars into Afghanistan and

then scream about pouring a few million dollars into somewhere in Latin America, I can't understand it.

I've never heard a person I know or have ever encountered who has ever brought up Afghanistan, or the problems of Afghanistan, ever in my presence. How many people at dinner parties start talking around about those poor damn miserable Afghani people? They don't even know who those poor damn people in Afghanistan are! I don't know why we're pouring so much into it. I'm really sort of asking you the question.

I guess we don't want to get onto that, but if I were the editor of the Chronicle today I'd send somebody over there and tell him to find out what the hell's going on. What are the bulk of the people doing and eating, how they are living, and what they are saying to each other in the privacy of their homes, or hotels, or on the street corner.

Riess: When you were collecting coins was it always known that you were the Newhall who was editor of the Chronicle? Or were you just any coin collector? Did you let people know who you were?

Newhall: Oh, not really. It was all informal and personal. Of course, if I wrote any collectors or dealers a letter, my name and title were on the letterhead. I may not have mentioned this earlier, but there was no identification on my office door, no name or title. But when people came in to see me, I presumed that by the time they came through the blank glass door they knew my name and what my job was.

I used to have a safe in the office, and I would play with my coins when people came in to see me, and I would try to keep some guests off balance. I would pull out a sack of coins and go through them or something. They'd think, "Oh, this damn fool isn't paying any attention to what I'm saying." I was listening to them, all right.

I was going to mention to you that in the early years I had to play a role in that office. It was a difficult time. I told you about how we had to fire people and people were mad, and nobody knew what was going to happen at the Chronicle. I felt it would be a good idea to throw everybody off guard or confound them, so I did have these coins and I would fool around with them when people came in to see me, and if I felt like it. But also I built in my shop back home in Berkeley a tree out of brass and copper tubing and black iron pipe and set it in a big copper kettle. I had a nice green Amazonian parrot in the tree and he would sit there, you know, and either cackle or defecate sometimes or something.

When somebody comes to call and sell you a bill of goods and some damn parrot is standing there about ready to nip their finger off, it does keep them a little bit on edge, you know, on their

toes. And sometimes they forget about their problems for a while. Then I put a big brass cannon in the office, mounted on the wall. It was a beautiful cannon. It is called a Lantaka, from about the sixteenth century, from Southeast Asia gun boats. And I made the mount for it. Carolyn Anspacher came running in one day--this was when the staff was giving me a bad time. "Oh my god," she said, "that's the loveliest thing I've ever seen!" And she began stroking this long brass cannon. I made some remark, from a Freudian standpoint, and I'll tell you, I never had any more trouble with Carolyn from then on. But anyway, that's just a little aside.

Minting Coins

Riess: Where's the office safe these days?

Newhall: I've got a couple of them here in this apartment now, right in the room next door, the little ones. Which safe do you mean? These were little decorative safes. I had eight or ten of them sprinkled around. I think there are a lot of safes in Dolly's basement still. But you know, safes are a beautiful decorative item if they're the proper type of safe.

I've always been fascinated with the genre, the hardware, the accoutrements of mints. I used to have presses, I used to have a nice hydraulic press. I've got quite a machine shop in the cellar, you know, with hydraulic presses. I can mint my own stuff any time I want to. And anything I mint is just as good as anything the United States of America mints, in terms of its intrinsic value, take my word for it.

I got some of my coin minting ideas from Spreckels. Which Spreckels was it? Claus? One of the Spreckels family. You know, they did a lot of business in sugar down in the Hawaiian Islands. And Spreckels made a deal with King David Kalakaua to mint for him --my figures will probably be off--a million Hawaiian silver dollars.

Have you ever seen a Hawaiian dollar?

Riess: No.

Newhall: Well, these Hawaiian dollars are exactly the same size as our American silver dollars, and they're made about the same way, and I think the Hawaiian coins were minted here in San Francisco. I'm not quite sure. But Claus Spreckels arranged it all. I think he arranged the manufacture of a million silver dollars with the king's face on the obverse--it could have been ten million. A million dollars in hard silver money was a lot of money then in a place like

the Hawaiian Islands.

Spreckels made the deal to sell the dollars to the king at a price of one dollar, American, apiece. So to begin with Spreckels made a good profit on the coins alone. He approximately doubled his money. In those days silver was selling for about forty cents an ounce, and there was about an ounce of silver in each dollar. So Spreckels made about fifty cents profit from each coin.

In addition, the king issued Spreckels a million dollars or ten million dollars worth of royal Hawaiian bonds, which I think were later paid off. I can't remember.

So I thought, if Spreckels can do this, why can't anybody do this? That is the way I got into that Anguilla thing, you know. It's perfectly legitimate. People have funny ideas about the sanctity of so-called government coins. Spreckels's coins and my coins are just as sound as the British pound, and a hell of a lot sounder than the recent Susan B. Anthony dollars put out by the idiotic U.S. Treasury Department.

Oh, just as a matter of general interest, there's something I think not many people realize: Chiang Kai-shek, when he left China in '48 or '49, needed some money. (I believe this was the time in which this was done. It might have been done earlier.) Chiang signed a purchase order for twenty million silver dollar-sized coins--I do not remember the exact number, but I could find out for you in a couple of minutes. He ordered twenty million Mexican silver pesos with the date 1908 on them. The date stamped on the coins said 1908, but these coins for Chiang Kai-shek were actually minted in 1948--that's right, they were made in 1948 but had the date 1908 stamped on them. And they were Mexican silver pesos. And where were those fake Mexican coins minted? Right here in the San Francisco United States Mint.

Why should anybody have any faith in anything if a Chinese guy can order the United States Mint to punch out fake Mexican pesos? And nobody, not even Chiang Kai-shek or the director of the American mint, goes to jail. So that's why I do not have all these worries about being picked up for counterfeiting.

Riess: And where did Spreckels do it?

Newhall: I think they were probably minted here in San Francisco. They look like it, the coins themselves. I'll show you one before you go; I think I have some around. They bring $100, $200, $300 now, good ones. Maybe even more.

Drag Racing

Riess: How old were you when you were drag racing?

Newhall: Well, let's see, the kids were about eighteen, so I would have been fifty, fifty-five, I guess. You know, drag racers--I don't know if you've ever seen them, they're these little things like sling shots, you know, with a guy sitting back here and all this engine and wiring up ahead of him. The whole idea is to run a quarter of a mile from a standing start. So what you do is you take an engine, you beef it up, and you get a rear end, a long projectile like this with a couple of little bicycle wheels up front and boom! Off you go.

Well, drag racing got to be pretty big and now it's sort of mostly a professionalized sport. But it started out with the hot rods the kids made. I got interested in it while I was restoring cars and so on, because working with engines you like to see how much horsepower you can get out of so many pounds of iron. So we would go drag racing.

I bought from the Fulmer Brothers here in town a little dragster, a"rail," they had been racing, for $700 I think, engine and all. Our kids were interested in it, so we used to go around to Lodi and Vacaville and Fremont and in the south to the San Fernando or the Palmdale strip on Sundays and Saturdays. We'd get up early and we'd put the trailer with the dragster on it and haul it out to the tracks. It was just fun, like showing at the concours.

Riess: They were racing, or you were racing?

Newhall: They would drive it. See, I couldn't drive because I've got a bad right leg and it's hard for me to drive a car like that.

Riess: You didn't worry about their getting hurt?

Newhall: No. The ones we had, it was only a D class and they do only about --120 I think was the best run we ever made. Going 120 miles an hour in a quarter of a mile takes about ten or eleven seconds. You wouldn't believe what they'll do now, I mean the big ones. Ooh boy. Even then they were fast, they'd do 180. But now they'll run a quarter of a mile from a standing start in five seconds. That's five seconds and he's a quarter of a mile down the road and he's doing about 280. Now that's pretty fast and pretty strong. I never got into that because that's dangerous.

Riess: It sounds dangerous. Are they edging other people out, or are they just in their own slots?

Newhall: Normally they're two-by-two, doubled. You have your own slot. If

you go over across the dividing line, you're disqualified, boom, like that. No, no, it's not a feud--it's only speed, acceleration. It has nothing to do with cornering or anything, it's just straight. You have parachutes to stop you at the end. Because 280 miles an hour in a car is pretty fast and you've got to stop before the end of the track. They have crashes but there are very, very few fatalities. You're all strapped in with bars and all this.

Laurel Hill and Cypress Lawn Cemeteries##

Riess: Where does your involvement with Laurel Hill Cemetery and the Cypress Lawn Cemetery Association fit into things. You're a trustee?

Newhall: Why would I be involved with a cemetery, is that what you're saying?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Well, my uncle and my grandfather were. My great-grandfather was one of the founders of Laurel Hill I think. And it has always seemed to me one of the responsibilities of a citizen to provide a little pro bono publico effort toward establishing a dignified disposal service for the earthly remains of one's friends and family. What do you do with your dead normally? Throw them out in the lawn or put them on a bonfire or what? I don't know.

Riess: Well, let somebody else worry about it.

Newhall: Why somebody else? Laurel Hill was an old San Francisco cemetery. My grandfather, I know, and my great-grandfather were on the board. That cemetery took care of a lot of people who were out here. Then the city grew up around Laurel Hill to the point where the graveyards were legislated out of town.

In the meantime, a group of San Franciscans and people from down the Peninsula got together to establish Cypress Lawn. Some of them I think went in it for the money. There was a Cypress Abbey Company started which bought the land. What they did was basically make a deal with a group of San Franciscans to run the cemetery, which is a totally non-profit deal from the point of view of the people running the cemetery. Then the Cypress Abbey land would be available to be purchased by Cypress Lawn at I'm sure a profitable figure for the Cypress Abbey Company. The people in Cypress Abbey were not on the Cypress Lawn board. We at Cypress Lawn were just acting, I guess, as some kind of continuity, caretakers or something, to take care of the remains of a lot of people.

Riess: Why is it pro bono publico? Is this a place that anyone can afford

to end up in, or not?

Newhall: Cypress Lawn? Well, the gravesites at Cypress Lawn are not exactly free, but the residents of our cemetery run from the Bonanza kings to the homeless. As of today there are a tremendous number of Chinese buried out there. They will soon be the majority.

All these cemeteries when they moved away from San Francisco, out there on Laurel Hill, went down to Colma. That is outside the city limits of San Francisco and it became sort of the cemetery center of the whole area and the Peninsula. And now, of course, it's becoming automobile row. Markets and things are moving in there. I don't know how long the cemeteries are going to last down there.

Cypress Lawn basically used to be no more expensive than anywhere. You could go in there for $200 or $300, something like that. It wasn't much in a way. The whole business of death and disposal is a very complex one. I am not qualified to talk about it too much, I'm really not, because of course the washers of the dead, the morticians--that's where the money goes, basically, to your undertaking parlors. This is disjointed, the way I'm speaking now, but the undertaking parlors used to sort of scratch the back of the cemeteries or vice versa. The mortician could be very choosy as to where they were going to send their customers--shunt their bodies off one place or another. I'm using these terms casually.

Cypress Lawn has a large endowment fund. When I say "large," it's enough just about to keep the grounds up, the grass green, and so on. And the endowment fund grows because there's a lot of investment. Half our responsibility is the endowment care fund, the other half is the operating budget, the cemetery operation part of it. You try to make enough money to take care of the service and the burials and cremations and so on.

In Cypress Lawn now, and perhaps some of the other cemeteries, we are just about full up. Right now we're going through a very involved series of studies and discussions to try to decide what we're going to do. Are we going to expand, try to find some property nearby so we'll have room for new customers? Are we going to perhaps go out and buy a satellite area down the Peninsula, across the way, in Alameda or Contra Costa county or something? (One of the reasons I came up this week, I had to talk with a little committee about it.) Or do we want to just pull in our horns?

You see, we are a perpetual care cemetery, so we are absolutely liable and responsible to keep those grounds up, and its not in as good condition as I would like right now. We have pledged and taken money from the people who have sent their deceased and beloved relatives to us, and we must maintain the grounds perpetually, for all time. There is a problem as to whether or not from our

endowment care fund, which we have now set aside, there is enough money to actually keep it all going. I suppose there will be somehow.

Riess: What a huge responsibility.

Newhall: Oh, in a sense. It's sort of automatic, too.

Everything that--what's her name?

Riess: Jessica [Mitford].

Newhall: Jessica. She's a smart girl. I think I mentioned I tried to hire her to write sports for the Chronicle once. Everything she says about the death ritual is basically, I think, quite accurate. I think some of her conclusions--I don't remember it now too well, but some of the conclusions might not be totally correct. Some of the rationale may be wrong.

It's a funny business, because most of the cemeteries, or a great many of them, are non-profit. At least some of them are. But then there is an overlay of people who are trying to make a buck out of it. And that's why you will see that at the moment among enterprises like the Neptune Society and the different do-it-yourself disposal entrepreneurs, the prices are becoming competitive. Well, oddly enough at Cypress Lawn we're bumping our prices way up, because we don't have enough space any more. But there is still plenty of this melancholy business. Most people insist on thinking, well, their daddy's in Cypress Lawn, or something like that, because Cypress is a very historic place and a lot of the old families are indeed interred there.

Riess: Did they take the markers from Laurel Hill?

Newhall: Well, the people who were in Laurel Hill had the choice of bringing their own markers or having new ones made. Or, if they couldn't locate the survivors the remains at Laurel were placed in a common crypt on a mound with a large general marker at the crest. I think this was in the teens.

Riess: 1934.

Newhall: Oh, was it that late?

Riess: The evacuation of the Laurel Hill graves were in 1934.

Newhall: Almost all the old families brought their own monuments down. I know our monuments, Newhall family, are down there now, and we just add new ones in the plot when we pass into history. Such a move was done basically at the cost of the families, I believe.

There are a lot of generations of Newhalls there, my great-great-grandfather and my great-grandfather, my grandfather and their families, my father, my mother and my daughter. There are about six or seven generations down there, which for California is a pretty good go. The Cypress Lawn Board was just something I was asked if I would do and I said yes. If you want to be impractical about it, to be on the board of the Cypress Lawn Cemetery is described as the most exclusive club in town, not by me but by some of my colleagues. So far we have all been white, male, Protestant, and a member of the Pacific Union Club.

Riess: This is to be on the board, not to be in the ground.

Newhall: Not to be in the ground, no, to be on the board. You know it's a gag, but nevertheless it's true. I mean, all of the people running Cypress Lawn, the trustees, you know, they all sort of went to school together, or their fathers did, and knew each other and so on and so forth.

Riess: Is there a crematorium also?

Newhall: Yes. Yes, we do provide a crematorium service for a lot of people, I mean for a lot of other cemeteries, too. But we do not have a mortuary. We're not an embalming business.

Riess: But isn't cremating the solution to the space problem?

Newhall: I don't know. Really, I'm disinterested in getting into that. It's simply because I figure everyone has his own choice. I could make a--I personally, if I had to dispose of people, I would build a huge induction coil and just put the deceased into a thin plastic casket, shove them in, and pull the switch, and you'd have them reduced down to some real powder. The cremated remains of your loved one--as cremations go today--do not necessarily resemble a pot of Johnson baby talcum powder. But, you know, we all have our own ideas.

Riess: You don't have a bias one way or the other about what is done?

Newhall: Oh lord, no. They've got fellows down there that are buried with their motorcycles. One of the Hell's Angels is down there. They want to put a motorcycle there, that's their choice.

Riess: What are you like when you get around with these Pacific Union CLub friends? Do you get much more buttoned up?

Newhall: Oh, no. Lord, look, we were all kids together. I do this, but it's not my nature, I don't like it particularly. I mean, who wants to be in the cemetery business, for goodness sake? But somebody's going to have to wash the dishes, aren't they?

Riess: You've described it as extremely exclusive.

Newhall: Remember, I said this is a joke.

Riess: What about women and blacks?

Newhall: Oh, god. We'll bury women and blacks, sure. If that's what you mean. Anytime you want. I would just love it if the women would come down there, or the blacks, and say, "We want representation on the board of Cypress Lawn." Now, come on. Who cares?

Riess: Maybe it's the backdoor into the Pacific Union Club.

Newhall: No, it's probably the way to get out of it. I probably shouldn't have said this. Look, I just meant it casually. We have to find some reason for being there at Cypress Lawn. We're paid a very small fee, and it costs me three times the fee just to come up in the airplane, stay here, and go back, in order for me to attend the meeting. I mean, there's no money in it for anybody that we're involved with. Please, I don't know if I made that clear. And I don't go around saying, "Hey, look at me, I'm a member of the Cemetery Board," for god's sake. I don't usually get into it. I'm frankly very casual about it.

As I say, anybody who comes--. Somebody came by the other day, some old couple, the husband died, the widow wanted to have a nice monument for him. I won't tell you how much she spent on it. She had to build it. But it ran more than six figures. The whole thing is totally preposterous, totally. She's got her own niche in there now, her dogs are in there, she's just waiting to die. She goes and sits in there, waiting to join her husband.

Now what are you going to do? You can't do any more for her than try to make her happy, can you? What is the difference if a woman, let's say, pays $200 to sprinkle her husband's ashes, or $50? You know, the Neptune Society, you talk about your harpies and your sharpies, those guys weren't even scattering the ashes. Did you know that?

Riess: Yes, I read about that.

Newhall: These swell fellows in the brave new world. But I started to say that if this poor rich widow wants to spend many thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars on her husband's remains, what's the difference if she does it this way with a little granite around him, or if a very poor person spends just the same percentage of her worldly estate sending him out to the ocean? What's the difference?

Riess: If she had commissioned a sculpture by Saint-Gaudens, or someone like that, then we could all go down and admire it.

Newhall: She didn't, but I wish she had. The burial practices, the disposal

practices of us humans, are fascinating. They are. I don't criticize them, I don't praise them, they're just fascinating. So what have we got? On the south border of Cypress Lawn there's a marker there. It says "Charlie deYoung, 18-whatever to 18-whatever, San Francisco pioneer," something like that. He's on our side, the Cypress Lawn side, right next to the fence.

On the other side of the fence what does it say, on Holy Cross? "Michael deYoung, deceased." Well, Mike made it into the Catholic Church before he died, so he's in Holy Cross. But I guess he didn't want to be separated from Charlie, so Charlie's right within ten or fifteen feet of him but he's on our side, the Protestant side, you see. Charles was either--I don't know whether he was a Jew or a Protestant or what in terms of his faith, I just don't know, but he's not in Holy Cross. That always amused me. One ground has I guess been hallowed by one group, and another by another.

Exploratorium: Frank Oppenheimer and Walter S. Johnson

Riess: How did Frank Oppenheimer become interested in the idea of turning the Palace of Fine Arts into the Exploratorium? And when did you get involved in that?

Newhall: Well, Frank is a very unusual man. I knew him very slightly during World War II. He and his brother were accused of running around with the communist party line people here in town, and so on and so forth. J. Robert Oppenheimer was I think personally one of the great martyrs of modern America. I could go into that at great length. Anyway, Frank had been under a cloud over the years. He was considered a security risk during the war. He had been down at Los Alamos working on the atom bomb. The FBI was always lurking around the corner or something like that.

Frank finally ended up running a ranch in Colorado. He was a very brilliant physicist. (This is Frank we're talking about.) Of course, he was in the shadow of his brother. Frank became head of the Colorado Cattleman's Association and he had to go back to Washington to lobby for federal farm support or something like that. Frank said the congressmen couldn't understand why this pinko was coming back trying to lobby for supports for cattle feed.

I had known him just slightly, really before my relationship with him and the Exploratorium. This must have been in the middle sixties, something like that. He came in one day for some reason or other to ask me, "Gee, what can we do about this?" He outlined a little bit about his idea for a science museum. Somebody might have suggested he come in or he just came in.

I liked Frank. I didn't really know him then at all, but he was such a sweet guy. And he had run into a lot of quicksand trying to find support to get space for the museum. Again, like Karl, this whole thing was all Frank's idea. I think then he had his eye on the Palace of Fine Arts. And he said, "Gee, I can't get anybody to really come along." So I said, "Look, do you want to talk to the mayor?"

Alioto had just gone in. I called up and asked if he'd talk to Frank. I think I might have written a note or something. I think I turned it over to Dave Nelson. Dave used to do a lot of message carrying around town. He would make some things work. So Frank went and saw the mayor, and he apparently was well-received after he had been rebuffed a few times. Now I am fuzzy about some of this, because I had never thought I was really too much involved in it at all. But I think perhaps just the fact that I persuaded him or suggested he go see the mayor, maybe he got a little better hearing.

At this point I think I should cover a couple of points about Walter S. Johnson. Mr. Johnson was one of these--I didn't know him at all much, really, but his was a fairly strange San Francisco business success story. He lived out there somewhere on the other side of the hills, Orinda or Pleasanton.

Johnson's press agent, his PR flak, was Dorothy Kay. Her maiden name was Kay. I really loved her dearly. Al Kay had been a Chronicle employee and this sister of his was a charming girl. They came from a San Francisco family, their father made shoes. I think the original name was Kachinsky, something like that. Ted Friend was her husband. He had written a night club column for the New York Journal, I believe, or perhaps Post. He and Dorothy came out and took on the Alturas paper up in northern California. They wanted to become country publishers and of course this was a disaster--it was awful.

The Friends came down here. Dorothy was a good operator and she was a good public relations person. Johnson was one of her clients. He had been putting up money for the Palace of Fine Arts restoration. (That was a long story on its own.) Therefore if Frank Oppenheimer wanted to get some of this Palace of Fine Arts space for his museum he was going to have to get Johnson's okay, kind of. Spiritually Johnson was involved in it.

I can't remember this too well. I know I went out one time to see Johnson. But then I got Ruth interested in it. I said, "You follow up on this thing. I can't do all this." So she got involved with Frank in this, and she kept plugging away on it. She is much closer to it and much more knowledgeable about what we all did. I don't think I ever became a trustee because I thought I shouldn't.

Riess: Well, you are a trustee of the Palace of Arts and Sciences.

Newhall: Oh, is that it?

Riess: Yes, that's what its official name became. In Who's Who it says "Museum of Arts and Sciences," but that must mean Palace of Fine Arts.

Newhall: Maybe. Oh, don't believe anything in Who's Who. I make up half of that anyway.

But anyway, Ruth and I got a little bit involved. First we were trying to get together a board of trustees--that's the most important thing you have to do in setting up a cultural public institution like this--trying to get a few names whom people don't know but respect by reputation, then get a few people who will work. I know we helped them get together some, and I think Palmer Fuller was one of them--he was a good friend of mine--and a few of the San Francisco guys, you know, more of the WASPs up there at the P.U. Club and that kind of thing. I think maybe either Dave Packard or Bill Hewlett--I'm not even sure about that.

Anyway, the thing just finally did get going. What Dave Nelson has done in many cases is he goes around selling the Chronicle's "ass." I use that word purposely. He'll say, "If you guys will go along, you know you'll get good press." He's just a wheeler-dealer.

Riess: They'll get entre to the Chronicle or other things?

Newhall: Oh, sort of, I guess. I never was involved in a deal for selling this, a real quid pro quo, unless I thought that quid was of value to the community. And I do not remember the specifics in this.

I did talk with Frank a great deal about the selling of the Exploratorium idea to the public. By that I mean, what is it going to have, how are we going to package it for publicity? and such. We got to be quite good friends during all this, but Ruth was really more active in that than I. And I am not qualified, as I sit here, to tell you very much about it, except that Frank had a helluva good idea. I hope it will continue, and I have no idea what shape it's in now.

I think Frank was an absolutely unique, marvelous person. He was tremendous from my point of view. He was very knowledgeable. He had the rare gift for being able to relate ideas to the real world, the practical presentation of a scientific concept.

##

Newhall: Frank was very, very generous in making some public recognition of what Ruth and I had done to get the Exploratorium off the deck. And I think it was basically totally unmerited, I really do. I was

always very touched by his loyalty. Both Ruth and I did in one way do what we could to really get it going. But Frank did the whole thing himself. I mean nobody else deserves, as far as I'm concerned, any serious credit. He raised money better than anybody I know, better than I ever could. Frank was a genius at that.

But I started to say, I was in a rage about something. And that was, the minute Frank died--you know, they set up this annual banquet or annual dinner, give an award, and the guest of honor makes an address and a speech, and there have been some great speakers at the annual Exploratorium banquet. Well, the last one I went to--I don't think it was this year's, it was probably the year before, after Frank had died--in their infinite wisdom the board saw fit to get as speaker Bobby Inman, I think his name was, Robert Inman, who had been either CIA or a national security advisor or some damn thing involved in either Vietnam or I don't know what. And I was so goddamned mad about that that Ruth and I, we just--I wouldn't send them a nickel the next year. I'm saying this for the tape. I was shocked that they would so politicize the Exploratorium, that they would get some Washington member of the CIA establishment as the belle of the annual Exploratorium ball.

Frank's widow boycotted the banquet. She never did go to that last dinner. You know, we usually go and buy a table and make a little contribution and so on, but that's when I was angry. And I hope that this is not an indication that they're just going to go down in the pockets of some of the well-heeled corporate backers. The Exploratorium should be above and beyond politics. There's nothing like it in the world that I've ever seen.

Riess: Did you encourage Johnson in his undertaking in the first place?

Newhall: Oh yes, we went over to see him.

Riess: This "we," now this is the Chronicle?

Newhall: Ruth and I.

Riess: I mean in the days when the Palace of Fine Arts was either going to fall or be saved.

Newhall: Yes. Oh, we'd give them all kinds of publicity. I was starting to talk about Dorothy Friend. She was a good friend and I thought it was a wonderful thing that they were working on. You know, publicity, just the act of perfectly honest, honorable publicity, is one of the greatest motivations or incentives there can be to anybody in the community who's contributing something. It's the only recognition they get, really.

Riess: Where did he get his money?

Newhall: He was quite rich. He gave a few millions or something, but he was never accepted as part of the old San Francisco established financial structure. I cannot tell you where he got his money.

It was important, apparently, that we go over so that he would feel that he was being admired and respected, you know, by some of us and so on. He was a nice man. As I recall, I think in the middle of it he got into a messy domestic situation where his wife charged that he'd been beating her with an ivory-tipped whip or some damn thing. I must qualify that and say I do not know for sure, but I believe there was a little sadomasochism or something involved in a divorce. But I repeat, I may be wrong.

He put up the real money to restore it. I don't think he put up all of it by any means, but I do know he gave what was then considered a large funding. The city was going to tear down the Palace of Fine Arts. It was a plaster palace, you know, and it was crumbling away, and Walter Johnson gave two million dollars to save it. Maybe he gave more money later on. I presume in the end it was three or four million dollars. Do you remember? I really don't. That's a big building. Oh, it's huge. They had tennis courts there, you know, for a while and so on.

Riess: I was surprised it wasn't more roundly supported by everyone.

Newhall: I haven't seen the people of San Francisco support anything that they haven't been screwed into supporting--or something. I think it's a disgrace. You know, it was hard to get money for the Maritime Museum. We never did. I don't know if the library gets any money now. Every now and then they'll get some widow and she'll put up a big chunk of money for, you know, like Davies Symphony Hall or something like that. They're fine people, but it's usually individual. It's the publicity, the public recognition, that usually does it. And Johnson came along and basically was the angel for the Palace of Fine Arts, and I guess Mrs. Davies, God bless her --I don't know her--put up all this money for the symphony hall. There have always been a few people, but I've never seen the general public support a damn thing here.

Riess: That's interesting, because you said earlier that most of San Francisco doesn't even know what San Francisco is all about.

Newhall: That's right.

Riess: They're living someplace where they don't even see the bay. So how can that change? I mean, you were very interested down in southern California in using that paper to make people much more aware.

Newhall: That's what we were doing up here. As I say, you can give them publicity, but that'll only appeal to the people who really do it, I mean, who put up the money. You try, you know, to get a group, a

board of trustees and so on, and you try to give them publicity and put together a couple of social functions. But it takes lot of doing. Public community just doesn't flow like the mighty Mississippi.

Riess: Well, it's obvious from the social pages that it's always the same four hundred, or two hundred people.

Newhall: The same group has been behind everything, basically, yes. And it's amazing, in those times when I was more active you would go to four or five people in town. You've met some. You've met Lurline Roth. She'd give something. Alma Spreckels and the deYoung girls, Phyllis deYoung, who's still alive.

The corporations and the foundations are where the money comes from now. I'm not well up on it, but you know, you get your United Crusade or whatever they call it now, things like that, and the corporations go along with their regular corporate gifts, but that's pretty generalized. Once in a while a steamship company, you get them to spring a few thousand dollars for something with a maritime flavor. I know Frank, he got some very nice grants from some of the foundations for the Exploratorium. I'm not sure, I think Hewlett-Packard probably gave some. I think our own little family foundation gives them a few thousand dollars every year. But it all comes back to the same sort of people in the end.

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XI ONE FAMILY TRIBAL GROUP, OBSERVED

[Interview 8: February 16, 1989]##

Henry Mayo Newhall

Newhall: I ought to go through and do our family genealogy for you some time, but you can see it written down elsewhere. We had a family dinner two nights ago, one reason I came up. Ruth couldn't make it. We have a little Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation, and the members of the board, who are now all quite young, except for two or three of us, got together for dinner at the home of a cousin of mine who has just finished his home in the Chinese taste. It looks something like the Brighton Pavilion, if you've ever been there, in England.

Riess: Is that here in San Francisco?

Newhall: Yes. There's a story somebody should write. Is this on?

Riess: Yes, it's on.

Newhall: Someone should do a story, really, on the Newhall family, and by that I mean a rather more personalized take of what one family tribal group is like, that was part of the rise of Anglo culture in San Francisco starting with 1849 or 1850. It's the most fascinating social group I've ever been connected with. I've never seen a bunch of people who have quite as many foibles--I don't want to get off on that now, but that's a story that somehow somebody ought to put together sometime.

Riess: I've done some research on Newhall Land and Farming, and because for a long time it was family-owned there was little publicly known about the business. But now the stock is available. And the company is into very different things. How has the family business changed over the years?

Newhall: Well, let me start this way. I think I have been privileged to have lived through a very interesting, constantly changing time, in which

California changed from a feudal, Anglo-Saxon frontier into what is now an intercontinental, international kind of helter-skelter--well, I shouldn't mix my metaphors too much--melting pot. I was born into a land, Marin County, where there was a caste system- structure way of life.

California probably had as many people in it when I was born, and was brought up as a child, as there are in our Fifth District of Los Angeles County now, a couple of million people. I really don't know, I think San Francisco had probably 500,000, and that was probably about half of the state. I wouldn't be surprised. But my figures may be way off.

Riess: Did your family welcome change?

Newhall: Some of them. But many members of our family are still trying to live in the past, I think. We all are [laughs]. This is a little esoteric, some of these answers, because you will find that most of them who have any remnants of economic privilege left to them are building houses of their own, and they're different, their houses. You will see the house that Ruth and I are living in. It has been newly rebuilt, but it was originally constructed a hundred years ago, and there are very few like it. It was not our family's house, however. It belonged to our neighbor on the ranch next door. I just bought it about twenty years ago.

Riess: And the other members of your family are also seeking to preserve something?

Newhall: They buy houses, and they collect things. The dinner we went to the other night was given by young David Hill, who is a second cousin of mine, or son of a second cousin of mine. As I say, there's no use trying to go back in the genealogy; you can get the genealogy out of one of the family books.

But when Henry Mayo Newhall came out here in 1849--. He got sick in Panama, got the next boat north, and arrived here in town in 1850. He came out with the argonauts to dig for gold, which he didn't find, but he became an auctioneer. He was an auctioneer, and a pretty fast talker. I don't think he was very well educated, in terms of the formal educational system, because we can't find anything he ever wrote. As a matter of fact, the family is at this moment arranging to have a book written about him, and some of the more sensitive members of our family are now discouraged. Dr. Rolle down in Occidental is putting together a book on the life and times of Henry Mayo Newhall. Andrew Rolle, his name is.

One of my cousins, Peter McBean, didn't think that Dr. Rolle's findings were interesting enough, in a cultural way. [laughs] He didn't think his family--he wanted to give the project up, but I think there's going to be a book about Henry Mayo Newhall and what

he did out here. What Henry Mayo Newhall did out here was very significant in terms of the development of San Francisco. He went into the auction business with another great-grandfather of mine, whose name was Almer Ives Hall. Almer Halls' granddaughter married Henry Mayo Newhall's grandson. And my father Almer Newhall was the result of that. And that's where I come from. Fanny Hall Newhall died in childbirth when my father was born.

Back to 1850--. Almer Hall had the auction house, and Henry Mayo Newhall joined him. He was a great auctioneer. Maybe that's where some of us get a little flair for promotion from, I don't know. Then Henry Mayo Newhall got interested in a lot of local San Francisco projects. He was really active, I think, in the beginnings of the Bank of California, though I'm a little fuzzy about that. And he imported a minister--no, he didn't, the minister just arrived in town--Dr. William Anderson Scott, whose granddaughter married my father, and that's where I come from on my mother's side. Dr. Scott was a Presbyterian clergyman, had come from Andrew Jackson's place. He was a chaplain of the Hermitage, which I believe was Jackson's place back there in Tennessee.

Henry Mayo Newhall felt that religion was good for the people, better than opium, I suppose. So he supported Dr. Scott, and he started the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Did I go into this before?

Riess: I don't want you to repeat yourself, either. I guess what the thread was--

Newhall: Well, the thread was what Henry Newhall did. He backed a lot of things. He got into the railroad business and started the San Francisco to San Jose Railroad, which he eventually sold out to Southern Pacific. This tied in with his land acquisitions in 1870.

The Californios, the Mexican families that had owned these large Mexican and Spanish land grants, were going broke because of the drought. The cattle were dying of starvation in the hills, and Henry Mayo Newhall, after making some real estate money and constructing some buildings and things here in San Francisco, bought about five or six of these large Mexican land-grant ranchos. The larger ones were nearly 50,000 acres, or 75 square miles, which is half again as large as San Francisco. He bought the spreads for what sounds like nothing--two to five dollars an acre. But that was a lot of money then. It would be ridiculous now.

Some of the ranches have been disposed of. I know we sold the San Miguelito, the family did; it became part of Hearst's place down at San Simeon, and part of it and another ranch became Camp Hunter Liggett during the Second World War. The ranchos were spread all along the Coast Range, all the way down to the one that we call the Newhall Ranch, which is at Valencia, or Newhall, just north of Los

Angeles. The original Spanish name for the Newhall Ranch was Rancho San Francisco. And that was the main operating base for what became our family ranching enterprise. (Ruth's book, The Newhall Ranch, covers this whole thing.) [See citation following.]

Some senior member of the family was always in the south, to look after the southern ranches and orchards. And another carried on with the import-export business here in town. That was H.M. Newhall Co. Some of my great-uncles lived high on the California hog. One built great hunting lodges; one built a French palace; one a Georgian mansion; and my grandfather built here in San Francisco what is probably the largest Cape Cod cottage in California, if not the world.

The Next Generation, and Atholl McBean

Riess: They became well-educated in the next generation, didn't they?

Newhall: Yes. The second generation--by that, I mean my grandparents' generation--pretty much I think began mostly going to Yale, or at least the most stylish set of ivy covered walls they could get into. And down through my generation, until we went broke, they'd ship us all off to an eastern prep school, or at least a West Coast version of Harrow or Eton. I remember my father finally helped start a prep school at San Rafael--I don't mean he started it, I mean he contributed to it, along with a lot of other San Franciscans--the Tamalpais School for Boys in about 1926 or '27.

My father had gone to Mount Tamalpais Military Academy. There may still be a military academy over there, I don't remember. But they wanted us to attend a proper prep school, and that's when I began to hate school. I didn't want to leave the military school; I loved it there. I admired the big boys, the seniors in our school so much. From then on, I was with a bunch of little punks that had problems. We were all "problem children." That was the F. Scott Fitzgerald generation, and they were these latchkey kids, except instead of latchkeys they had governesses at home who took care of them.

Riess: It worked perfectly well in England.

Newhall: I think it's just great. I think what they have now--today in 1989 --where all these mothers are trying to work and take care of their kids at the same time, and driving themselves crazy, it is not working much better.

Riess: Well, it's interesting that you're talking about a kind of California elite, but basically they're just ranchers and farmers.

Newhall: Oh, here in California we're a kind of comfortable petite bourgeoise with maybe a little gilt around the edges. I mean, look at the homes that were built in San Francisco. The chic San Franciscans would go to Europe on tour, and they'd buy up every fancy spurious antique they could find. Some of them bought French counts for their girl children. Out of that came this San Francisco-Burlingame-Hillsborough-Marin County society.

Riess: Burlingame was one thing, but living in Newhall, what was the life there?

Newhall: I never lived in Newhall until recently. It was just a small rural farm town. I visited the ranch sometimes in the summers.

Riess: You're just an Anglo Californio.

Newhall: Yes. At the Rancho San Francisco,if somebody came by, if they dropped in, either announced or unannounced, to eat, dine, spend the night, or whatever, there was a faint echo of old colonial California about it. It was about an hour or two drive out of Los Angeles. We used to pile in the cars and go down there on the ranch for a week or two during the summers.

These were working ranches. They started out with cattle, and in the bad years my grandfather harvested--I suppose you would call it that--some of the native oak trees. Other people might say he chopped down a lot of oak trees.*

Riess: So there was a little short-sightedness there?

Newhall: But there were a lot of oak trees. They're trying to protect them now with all these fancy--what do they call them? environmentalist ordinances and that kind of thing.

Riess: Well, given this kind of background, it seems to me that your decision in the 1960s to go down and to buy the Signal and run a newspaper there is more complicated than just establishing--

Newhall: A little paper somewhere. Sure it was. I can tell that very

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*"...the company had to look for other sources of money. The Giambastiani Fuel and Feed Company of Los Angeles called attention to an asset that had been overlooked: the magnificent stand of several thousand oak trees in the parklike upper valley. From October 1910 through 1912 the woodsmen spared no trees, which were bought at $1 a cord and reduced to charcoal for the bakeries of Los Angeles." The Newhall Ranch, by Ruth Waldo Newhall, Huntington Library, 1958, p. 78.

briefly. The Newhall Land and Farming Company and the sister company called the White Investment Company had gone on hard times in the Depression. A man called Atholl McBean, who had married Margaret Newhall, a cousin of my father's, was another of those California-San Francisco tycoons, from the Gladding-McBean Tile Company. He became chairman of the board.

The Newhall Land and Farming Company, based on land and imports and exports, had enjoyed a great prosperity in a sense following World War I. My grandparents' generation were living like Balkan princes, or like British dukes. They had their comforts, take my word for it. They were living by liquidating the land, although they didn't look at it that way. They were selling off capital, they were living way beyond the income. This was happening in almost every single San Francisco family during that period.

When the Depression came along, the San Francisco and Los Angeles people went belly-up. All these kids who were going to school learned that there were problems at home, and a lot of them had to face the fact that if they were going to go to college at all, it would be some public college, like the University of California or Marin Junior College. We changed our sights. I remember I had been accepted with no problem at all, even though I had bounced around many prep schools, at Yale and Stanford. I had never thought of Cal before. Anyway, I ended up at U.C. and that was the best of all worlds.

I'm trying to get back. Oh, yes, Atholl McBean. This is where I wandered off. The Newhall Companies went bust, and they owed the banks, particularly Bank of California, quite a bit of money. My father lost all his shares of stock in the company. (The bank held the stock as collateral for loans he had taken out. Atholl McBean came along and bought my father's shares for his own son, for my cousin Peter.)

During the early Depression Atholl took over running the companies, and the company's only real serious asset at that time was what was formally entitled the Rancho San Francisco, the Newhall Ranch, which is north of Los Angelses. It was about fifty thousand acres, and it ran from a couple of miles inside the Ventura County line, eastward to the heart of the Santa Clara River valley, to where it opens out into what is Newhall, Valencia, and so on now. And its main business was running cattle. There was quite a lot of cattle on the ranges, and orange groves, citrus orchards, had been planted. We'd gone down there, as I say, as kids, and we loved it.

Well, Atholl had been head of the Gladding-McBean Tile Company, and he was a very active man in San Francisco's hierarchy of business, a tycoon, one might say. He was a very large and domineering man who frightened a good many people. He was convinced, and I suppose he still is--wherever he may be--that

anybody with the name Newhall was a moron. There was some ill feeling among the four or five branches of the family that this was not a very cousinly attitude.

The Legacy of Uncle Walter

Newhall: I had lost all of my father's interest in any share of the farming company; I thought, I would never enjoy any part of the family legacy. But there were a few shares with my name on them in an ancient trust fund that would be distributed on the death of Mrs. Nellie Harlow, a great-aunt who had married my great-uncle Walter back about 1890.

Riess: She had no children?

Newhall: No, she had no children. I would get a few shares. I would inherit one-third of a thirteenth of a fifth, you figure that out.

So. And I was married and working at the Chronicle, and I was interested in the family. That was the way I felt secure, I suppose, to be able to identify myself as belonging to something that was a family. And there was terrible fighting, and the family was splitting apart, and the reason I'm going into this is that Mrs. Harlow died--she was the woman whose death signaled the distribution of the Walter Newhall trust. I never told this story?

Riess: No. Her name was Harlow?

Newhall: Nellie Harlow. She was the widow of Walter Newhall, and she remarried a fellow called Harlow. When he died she lived as a widow in a hotel room here in Los Angeles, in a plush hotel. I never met her.

They were about to distribute this legacy in which there were these very few shares for me. Many people in the family had been quarreling with Atholl. They thought they had more rights to certain shares of the trust. Some people had died, and how was the legacy going to be split up, by families, or by remainder men? And so on. I knew that if this argument got into the hands of the lawyers, I would be wiped out, because the lawyers would eat up the whole thing. It didn't amount to all that much money, in my case anyway. But it was the only legacy I could see ahead.

So I sat down and wrote to every living adult member of the family that I knew. Most of them were in San Francisco, except for one group in Europe and another in New York! I wrote, "Look. We have among us this wonderful legacy. Why are we going to fragment it or fracture ourselves by fighting? Instead of going to court,

why don't we just have this whole thing arbitrated, and just let an arbitrator settle it for a fee, and let's all agree to abide by his decision." There were two pending suits, and there's no point going into it, it's horribly complex. For arbitrators I submitted a list of the names of five very prominent San Francisco attorneys I had got from an attorney friend of mine.

By golly, every single one of them--I was young, maybe twenty-eight or-nine--every one of them responded and said, "Okay." And they agreed. It worked out so that our branch--my father's branch --of the family as a whole got slightly less. And that was fine with me. We didn't get quite as much, and another branch got a little more. And that was fine.

Well, Atholl got interested in it. I suppose he thought he had finally found a Newhall who had a shadow of brain power. I am quoting now, his words. He said, "Look, I'm getting kind of old. Will you please just sort of watch after this, see if you can keep people here from destroying themselves?" Because there were <u>always</u> threats of all kinds of lawsuits among the family members. Either the attorneys, the counsel, or the accountants who were handling various estates and things, sort of had control of some of these cousins. So I spent a lot of my time and energy keeping everybody in the family in touch with each other and interested in what was going on.

<u>Pat Calhoun--Oil and New Money</u>

Newhall: At about that time, and this is in the late thirties now, a remote cousin on my mother's side of the family, Pat Calhoun his name was --. I may have told you about this. He came out from the deep south. He had gone bankrupt. He was living with his grandchildren, a couple of whom had married the daughters of Arthur W. Foster in San Rafael.

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Newhall: Arthur W. Foster was sort of a one- or two-generation success story. He had come out from Ireland. He had married my mother's aunt, Louisiana Scott, who was the daughter of William Anderson Scott, the Presbyterian clergyman I mentioned. (It's all kind of small, you know, these relations, it's an incestuous affair.) Old Pat Calhoun was broke. He had come west from South Carolina. He was a cheerful old gentleman, looked something like a retired Santa Claus, dressed in civilian clothes. Incidentally, this was the same Pat Calhoun who a generation earlier had been a big promoter in San Francisco, mixed up in the street car system and involved in the City Hall scandals surrounding Mayor Eugene Schmitz.

He came out, and he said, "I can't take charity from my six children who are out here"--two of whom were married to Fosters. He said, "I'm going to leave them each a million dollars." And that's exactly what he said, because it was at a Christmas gathering up at Hopland, which was one of the Foster estates up north near Ukiah. Ruth and I were there. We were broke and didn't have anything to give anybody for Christmas, so we--well, old Pat was sort of an oil entrepreneur, so we gave him for Christmas a "thousand-barrel well." I'll never forget that.

Ruth wrote a poem for him, giving him the oil well as a Christmas present. And that spring--. Pat had made a deal with Atholl. (Everybody sort of knew everybody else.) He said, "Atholl, I think there's oil under the Newhall Ranch." These are direct quotes, almost verbatim.

"Why, that's silly," Atholl said.

Pat answered, "Well, Atholl, I'd like to put a group together to explore for oil."

Now, they'd been drilling for oil down there on the Newhall Ranch for generations. That's where oil was first discovered in California, down in those hills north of Los Angeles. So to shorten it up, Pat Calhoun put together a group called Barnsdall, sank a well, and they hit in 1936 the most important oil discovery in California for generations, right on our ranch. And Pat Calhoun had ten percent of that oil action for himself. Atholl had been so skeptical about finding any oil under the ranch that we ended up with only ten percent of the royalties.

Pat Calhoun left more than a million dollars for all seven of his children. Afterwards he put a Hungarian countess, who was out of work at the time, up at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, and he used to go to call on her with a carnation in his lapel buttonhole every day. I think he was about eighty, and she was about seventy-five, but they were a very attractive couple. He was killed when he was crossing the street, in an automobile accident. He was run down and killed. I will never forget that. Here he was in the prime of life, and didn't live to enjoy it all.

Anyway, that started off the oil. That's why we're getting into all this, to lead up to the oil on the Newhall Ranch.

Riess: The had been selling oil rights to other outfits?

Newhall: We got a lot of our land from Union Oil, for example. The oil companies--there was a period that the oil companies had huge holdings out there in our area, because oil had been discovered and was being worked here and there in those southern California fields. And Union still has, or their heirs had--you know, these oil

companies have all changed around now, but they, and I think it was Union, they own the mineral rights under some of our grazing ranges on some parts of the ranch. But we still have two working fields on the ranches. So this oil money is what started the recovery of the ranches.

Riess: Was that generation sort of naive about money? In Ruth's book, she explains that whenever there were profits they would be distributed; everything was consumed.

Newhall: You mean the earlier generation, up to the time we went broke?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: Yes. Oh, if somebody needed some money, they'd just take some money out of the company, or borrow it. By the time Atholl took over, nobody was getting anything. Atholl was able--he hired George Bushell to run the ranches. They increased the citrus groves. George planted some fairly extensive walnut orchards. And cattle--we put in feed yards. We used to feed about twenty thousand head of cattle there. We'd run about ten or twelve thousand steers on the range, and they'd take in--buy and fatten up in the feed yards--another ten thousand, something like that. This is more or less the Newhall ranch I'm talking about. The other ranches were lesser versions of it. Most of them either ran or fattened or raised cattle. We had some properties in the Central Valley that, one or two of them, made a good income growing just regular farm produce, crops, cotton, a lot of beans, stuff like that.

But we were broke. I keep saying that. When I say broke, I mean that we were getting no money. None from it.

Riess: Your father, of that generation, was the only one who was completely bankrupted?

Newhall: They were all bankrupt. Oh, some of them lived well. But they were getting no money from the Newhall Ranches. Elizabeth Chesebrough is a cousin, and her husband [Arthur] ran the ranch down there at Newhall. When Atholl came over he was quite rich because the Gladding-McBean Tile Company was selling a lot of tile sewer pipe, I guess tiles for the men's and women's rooms in the Standard Oil stations, and he had some Standard Oil stock, and he was a Standard Oil magnate.

Fentress Hill was another. His wife was Marion Newhall. He was a participant in a big redwood lumbering operation. So some of them in different areas of California endeavor, did have an income, but the big homes were either sold or abandoned, and they were all living much--. My father really did go broke. He ended up owing money, and as I say Atholl bought his shares of stock.

Riess: So the legacy that was ultimately divided up that you suggested go into arbitration, what was it?

Newhall: Okay. That was the Walter Newhall estate trust. Walter Newhall owned one fifth of the whole company.

Riess: Just that fifth was the only thing that was left? That you might participate in?

Newhall: That was it. And my father was heir to one-thirteenth of it, because there were thirteen in that family, in that generation. These were all Uncle Walter's nieces and nephews. And then I would have got one third of my father's, so that was all I would have got.

Leila "Tangey" Newhall, and Kenny

Newhall: There was one branch of the family--sons or daughters of the Henry Newhall family--and things were so hard they had moved to Europe before, and therefore were there during, World War II. One of them who came back to California finally had been a German prisoner. This was Tangey. She had been living in Biarritz over in the south of France, and she got caught there because she wasn't allowed to take her dog home on the Gripsholm or whatever it was. She missed the last Swedish boat out of Lisbon, because her maid had told her that the Germans ate dogs. So she wouldn't leave her dog, and the Germans moved in, and by golly, the dog died two weeks after the Nazis moved in. Tangey had literally canceled her passage on the Gripsholm, and spent the rest of the war--I think she was president of the whist club or something--at a German internment camp in occupied France.

Riess: Her name was Tangey?

Newhall: She called herself Tangey. Her name was Leila Newhall. But everybody called her Tangey because she liked the song "Tangerine." She never married. She always thought there were germs in places, so she always washed her underwear with rubber gloves on. Now, don't ask me how.

Alice was Tangey's sister, There were three children in that Henry Newhall branch, Donald, an artist in New York, Tangey, and Alice. If you want me to personalize what happened with my involvement in this company, this is what happened. Alice came back, and she was the sweetest little old maid you ever met in your life, except she had been marrried to an Anglican clergyman who had been trying to marry her mother. When her father [Henry Newhall] died, Alice's mother was a very wealthy widow. Henry, her father, was one of the original five Newhall sons. And Uncle Walter, who

left this legacy in the end, was Alice's guardian, and he thought that the clergyman was a scoundrel, and a remittance man, and was after his deceased brother's widow.

So Henry stormed into the house and kicked the priest down the front stairs and said, "Don't you ever darken our door again." Well, he darkened the door just long enough to come back and get hold of Alice and marry her. And I guess she had a reasonably livable life. She bore one child, called Kenneth. And that was the only living heir in that branch of the family.

Alice was smarter about the war than Tangey. She got out of Europe just in time. She came back on the Gripsholm with her son Kenneth in tow. And Kenneth was a case.

Riess: What's Kenneth's last name?

Newhall: Kenneth O'Meara. The clergyman's name was the Reverend something-or-other O'Meara.

Kenneth was a problem. He was a big guy, very heavy, about my age, and he had a very high, piping voice. He was a very strange man. We got to be pretty good friends.

I used to enjoy all my family, and I loved Alice, because Alice used to like to play the mandolin. She brought me a Hawaiian steel guitar, and so we'd sit there and play the "Song of the Islands" together. She came to live with my mother, who had had a stroke, and they were living in the Women's City Club, that one on Durant Avenue in Berkeley. I used to go down there. My mother lived there during the war most of the time.

Alice was one of the sweetest people you'd ever meet. Why, she was amazing. How she would marry any man is beyond me, but she did. She had married that parson, and then he died, of course.

Riess: So did Kenneth prove to be a problem?

Newhall: Kenneth was a problem. I don't know exactly how you want to personalize all this, really how frank you want to be about all this, but Kenny took to the bottle. I was at the Chronicle by this time. This was right after World War II, right after, and I was Sunday editor, I guess. Kenny began wandering around the bars in San Francisco and ran up a lot of tabs. Somebody called Dixie got hold of him. Dixie was a saloon keeper, and Kenny's mother was terrified he was going to marry Dixie, and she didn't know what to do about him. She finally bought a little house in Berkeley when she moved out of the City Club, right across from Cragmont School on Marin Avenue. And she loved our kids, Ruth's and my kids. One of them, Tony, went to Cragmont School.

Alice was in--. I did not mention that she had always felt humiliated because she had been disinherited specifically by name by Uncle Walter because she had married this clergyman. (I forgot to mention that, which is an interesting part of the story.) I thought that was quite unfair, frankly, and so when Mrs. Harlow died and I got the family members all together, Alice's legacy was one of the problems.

I had not met Alice at this time, but I argued, "Look, Alice should get just as much as anybody else." And in the end Alice did indeed inherit her shares. Now, remember, Alice had a big chunk of her own stock from her father, but this is Uncle Walter's trust we're talking about. And that's why Alice and my mother and I were all pretty good friends.

Alice moved to Santa Barbara, and Tangey came home after the war. I mean, these were characters, this family, you can't believe! She came home, and they moved in together with Kenneth down in a house in Santa Barbara, on Butterfly Lane. Did you ever see that great play about Teddy Roosevelt digging the canal, "Arsenic and Old Lace?" where they kept Teddy Roosevelt upstairs and sent him down to the basement to dig the canal, and they'd murder these old men with the elderberry wine?

Riess: Yes, yes. This was the look of the whole thing?

Newhall: Yes. They kept Kenny in a room over the garage down there in Santa Barbara, and when people who came to call and who knew Kenny and wouldn't be surprised, they'd reach up and ring a bell, and then Kenny would come out and they'd all have a visit. It was an interesting thing.

I had really a great fondness for Kenneth, and Alice said, "Gee, if anything happens I hope you'll take care of Kenny." I said, "Sure, I will. I'll do my best." She died finally of cancer, and there was Kenneth. Well, Alice, absolutely to my astonishment, not horror, but shock and astonishment, Alice had decided to bequeath to Ruth and me a legacy of half of her Newhall farming company stock. The other half went to a charity, and some tax things were involved. I was absolutely astonished. I tell you we were very close, but I just couldn't believe it. And here was Kenneth.

Now, if Kenneth had children, then he would inherit everything. So that makes me sound as if there's a motive for a novel in here, about what's going to happen. What am I going to do with Kenny, am I going to poison him, or am I going to keep him living forever?

Riess: What was left to Kenneth directly?

Newhall: Nothing. Oh, a few thousand dollars, and his keep, sort of. I

think he could live in the house. He would never go hungry, but I was the executor, keeper, conservator, whatever you call it. No, he would never sign over the conservatorship. The Crocker Bank was trustee. Anyway, Kenneth had enough for a little spending money.

Now we're up to about the 1970s, almost. I believe Alice died probably in around the early seventies. Kenny lived there in the little Santa Barbara house, because Leila survived for a while, Tangey survived, and they lived there. But Kenny, as I say, had taken to drink, and he would float around Santa Barbara. He was known very favorably, fondly in every bar, but of course he owed everybody in town.

A few years later after Leila died, Kenny fell into the hands --this is not exactly really a California history we're talking about, but it's kind of interesting--of an Irishman who had been a footman or a butler in the old country. This Irishman had some kind of a nubile Irish wife. They had come over here and they decided they were going to pick up Kenny, and somehow cash in on his mother's money. There was another woman in Santa Barbara, who was okay. She acted as housekeeper and was really very nice to Kenneth. But people were after Kenny because they saw a lot of money there. He never married. I beg your pardon, he <u>did</u> marry; he got away years ago and married once before he came back, before Alice came back to this country. He married some German or Norwegian girl, and they went to Norway, but Alice got him back again, and that was dissolved.

Then he came back here, and he married a very nice woman who had a couple of children of her own. They were divorced. I always liked her, she's still alive, she's still living in a house that Ruth and I provide for her, because this house had belonged to Alice. But she's now taken care of. And Kenny never marrried again, and he has never fathered any children--that we know of.

Kenneth struck up a lot of very strange friendships. I kept pretty much in touch with Kenny because he was down in Santa Barbara at that time, and Ruth and I were in Piru. I felt responsible to see that he at least had enough money to pay his debts, and be cared for. We had some arrangement with a woman to take care of him. She sort of got him fed and stuff, or would find houses for him where he lived.

A short time after Leila died Kenneth had got into trouble with diabetes. Kenny just was accident-prone. And eventually his leg was amputated. He was over here in San Francisco at St. Joseph's Hospital, and I used to visit him all the time. He had no friends, except these strange people once in a while, but they were in Santa Barbara. When Kenny got out of St. Joseph's he took his solace in alcohol.

The Irish handyman-butler, and his wife who had been a barmaid, took Kenneth on a trip to Mexico--Kenny in his wheelchair and all. And I was very nervous all the time. I said, "Am I going to end up with ten more Mexican cousins who are going to get all this money? What's going on? What's going to happen? This is an awful thing. Kenny is just headed for doom here, because nobody loves Kenny much for himself." He was about three-hundred pounds then, and not very tall, and confined to his wheelchair, and most people thought he was not quite right, from an intellectual standpoint. Kenny wasn't all that dumb, but he did have his limited horizons at times.

Riess: It sounds awful, actually.

Newhall: Well, I'm trying to be very frank about it, because there is the makings of a novel in Kenneth O'Meara's bizarre trip through life. Believe me, Kenny was my friend and he was a problem. He was a lonely man.

Somebody, and I forget who it was this time, one of his flaky Santa Barbara keepers, persuaded him to take a trip over to Copenhagen, to go to that garden they have there, that amusement park, famous in Denmark.

Riess: Tivoli.

Newhall: Tivoli, you're absolutely right. And I was so nervous in a sense--I've never said this--I didn't know what might happen to Kenny in a Copenhagen Danish clinic to prepare Kenneth to bear children, or something. I didn't know what was going to happen. So I said to Tony, my son, "Look, you'd better tag along on the next flight and just watch what's happening with this kid. I don't know what's going to go on, whether they're going to suddenly come up with a Danish baby or something."

Tony landed over there the next flight, and he had no trouble finding out where Kenny was, and just sort of saw that he was on a sight-seeing trip. Tony was interested in chess, so he caught the plane to come home and stopped off in Iceland, and that's where Bobby Fisher was playing for the world championship, so you can date it with that. You remember Bobby Fisher? I think he won it, didn't he, against the Russian [Boris Spassky] up there in Iceland? And that would have been in I think the early seventies [1972].

And one reason why I was acting in this kind of paranoid way is that the Irishman that I had mentioned and his wife took Kenny down to Mexico. They took him down there, out to Lake Chapala. I found this out later. I didn't follow him that time. Hell, I like Mexico, I figured he wanted to have a good time, be my guest.

But Kenny's Irish escorts started legal procedure and had papers made up to adopt six Mexican children. Now, you see, if

Kenny had children, the problem was--this is fairly complex--but Alice's will said, "Issue of the body of my son." And Alice meant a Newhall. If Kenny had any natural children all Alice's estate would go to such natural children or "issue." But the lawyers who drew up her will had left some boilerplate in the end which said that the word "children" included adopted children. So there was going to be a hell of a lawsuit if a lot of adopted children showed up asking for Alice's estate. I mean, there was no question in anybody's mind as to what Alice had meant. It was weird.

Well, Kenny's Irish friend and his wife got papers to adopt these Mexican kids, and for some reason or other, it fell through. I think they found that maybe a Mexican adoption would not hold up. Coming back across the border, they decided they would make their fortunes another way. Kenny traveled by wheelchair--he had the bad leg--so they took the tires off his wheelchair, and they filled it up with marijuana or cocaine or something, and they brought him across the border, and I think this probably paid some of their expenses. I think they were successful in that.

Riess: How do you know that one?

Newhall: I can't remember. I guess Kenny told me. I guess. I'm really not sure. They were not arrested, but I think the woman who took care of him most of the time told me this, because she was so mad at the Irishman. But really, it was very confusing.

Kenny finally took sick and died. Alice had left some money to the hospital in which they took care of him, and they gave him a bad shake in that hospital. I came down one day to see Kenny, because I tried to be quite--you know, follow him, and help him out, and to make sure he was getting fed and stuff. It took me three trips to that place before I could find the doctor. They wouldn't do anything with Kenny or for Kenny. They found him boring and a nuisance. I finally got the doctor on the telephone in his private airplane with his own private phone in it. I thought, that's a hell of a way for a doctor to be taking care of patients down in Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara's a strange place, it's full of a lot of strange people, and rich people, but--.

Kenny stayed there for a while and then he got out, and then I took him to another hospital. He had been having trouble with gangrene; he was just this terribly pathetic thing. Kenny was an alcoholic, and I more or less--I didn't encourage it, but I didn't discourage it. I think alcohol was the only pleasure he ever had, really truly. I know I certainly felt that if I was in that condition that is probably how I would float away.

I'll get off Kenny with one more story. We'd go down and try to have dinner with him, or take him out, or fool around, every couple of weeks. There was a place called Santa Claus just outside

of Santa Barbara--he was living down there in Summerland--we were having dinner at this quite nice restaurant in Santa Claus, sort of a roadside chop house. And this story is to demonstrate that Kenny was not a moron. Kenny was an expert in the field of sports. He used to watch a lot of sports events on television.

At this little family celebration we were having the people at the next table were in a bibulous frame of mind discussing horse racing. The fellow at the adjoining table said in a loud voice, "I'll bet anybody here you can't tell me the name of the only filly who ever won the Kentucky Derby." They couldn't answer him correctly, they lost their bets. And then the fellow turned to us and said, "Well, anybody at your table here want to take me up on that?"

Kenny looked up at him. He said, "I regret, sir, I knew the filly's name, she won in 1915, but I regret I don't seem to remember," and the fellow jumped up and said, "You won, you've won." I asked, "What do you mean? Who do you mean?" He said, "The name of the filly was Regret." That's the story. I think it was probably correct. I've never checked it.

XII NEWHALL LAND AND FARMING COMPANY

Corporate Leadership

Newhall: Well, that's enough wandering around. So Ruth and I did inherit a substantial part of Alice's share of the Newhall Land and Farming Company, and that was the way we got back into it, at least financially. This is aside from the Walter Newhall estate, now. So that's the reason that we participate to any extent at all, and I've been still fairly active in it, although I'm not as active in it now as I was when Atholl was still there.

Atholl was a problem. He got to be very old and very crabby and very unreasonable. I was one of the few people who could kind of calm him down. And then he finally took off and got mad at me, after I bought the Signal, the little paper down there. He was furious because I think the Signal accused the Los Angeles County tax assessor of being a crook, or something like that. Corporate ranchers don't understand the difference between newspapers and farming.

But I always made it my business to be as active in the Newhall Land and Farming Company as possible, at a policy or advisory level, or something or other--a morale level. I would try to keep them modest and honest. I enjoyed it.

Riess: You are called a communications expert in the company report.

Newhall: Oh, I guess I put that down for want of anything else. I put down anything I want.

Riess: "Communications consultant."

Newhall: Yes. See I had sold the Signal by that time. I have always been listed in some newspaper context as editor of the Chronicle or editor or publisher of the Signal. Peter McBean puts down rancher. Different people do different things.

Riess: Who's Jane Newhall?

Newhall: Janey is a first cousin of mine, lives right up here in San Francisco. She was my closest relative of the lot; although we have different grandmothers, we have the same grandfather. Jane is the only child of my Uncle Edwin, who lent my father some of his shares in another family company which have been since paid back. We were all very close, and we all lived in the same house during the late unlamented Depression. She still lives there. Janey is a spinster, she is still a member of the board.

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Riess: When I looked at the board members listed for Newhall Land and Farming Company I thought perhaps Ezra Zilkha was a pseudonym, you in another guise!

Newhall: Cousin Ezra. He's the most active non-family member we've ever had on the board. He's a very smart young man. And very ambitious. The banquet we held in his honor to welcome him, I got up and said that he was from now on formally Cousin Ezra. In part he is an Iraqi Jew and has a private investment company. But we have to keep it in the family.

We're having all kinds of trouble in the company, now. People are investing in it and they's speculating in it, and we're going through a very difficult period. See, we went public to sell stock when Tom Lowe was president back along the end of Atholl's life in there, about 1972 or '73--I really can't remember the exact year, but that's easily ascertainable. And since then, it's been a different ballgame, if I may coin a phrase.

Atholl went through a very, very difficult period getting old, the same way I am now, sort of. He hired and fired about four or five executive vice presidents. I don't know, but I think psychologically he wanted--it doesn't matter if I say this--he wanted the company to be his monument, to be a granite headstone on his grave, and to bring it down with him, almost. He wanted to die, and he was mad at me in the last two or three years.

Riess: You mean he'd rather destroy it at the end?

Newhall: Well, let it destroy itself without him, or something.

He'd asked me one time if I would take over and run the company, and I wouldn't. I was at the Chronicle then, and I said, "No." For whatever it's worth, he has a son Peter, who has a great deal of stock. He has my father's share as well as his own, and his mother's. Atholl and his son did not get along. He was terrible to Peter. It was a very difficult relationship.

Fortunately, when I was more active with the companies I hired a guy to run the San Francisco office of the White Investment Company, which was my great-grandmother's estate. And Atholl took a great shine to him. He was a young man, and his name was James F. Dickason, and Atholl sort of transferred his filial attention to Jim. Jim Dickason eventually became president and chairman of the Newhall board. Atholl was the last family member who had any active, leading participation in the management of the company.

Riess: Flattering that he thought that you would be the person to run the company, wasn't it? Or wasn't it?

Newhall: Well, it's just as if he transferred from Peter to me, and then he got mad at me and transferred to Jim Dickason. Atholl--I was always very loyal to Atholl. I was loyal in that I tried not to let people react and get together to fight him. There was plotting, there were family feuds going on. I told you about the letter I wrote. They really, everybody, were dedicated to Atholl's destruction. Difficult as he may have been, he was a remarkable man, he really was. He was a movie character actor, a magnate, and absolutely dictatorial. People had a hard time getting on with him.

Dynasties and Families--Taking the Good with the Bad

Riess: If it's a board, why can't you get rid of the dictator?

Newhall: You're afraid of him, afraid to do without him. This goes on in every big company in the world. American corporations are--I don't know if they're unique, but it's the same as dynastic situations in a general society. How is the power wielded or maintained in any dynasty? It's primogeniture in England.

Riess: Well, you saw it at the Chronicle, didn't you?

Newhall: Sure. And I'm sure that now at the Chronicle they're going through all kinds of problems deciding how they're going to shake out the different deYoung family controls and relationships now that Phyllis Tucker has died. The whole thing, Chronicle Publishing Company, will be vested in the heirs. That's exactly the same kind of will that Henry Mayo Newhall left. It goes through family groups per stirpes. I don't even know how the deYoung family will work it out. There's a lot of ill feeling here and there. And this happens in families, and I think it's terrible.

I really cherish this strange Newhall family, because it's one of the few things I have to give me some kind of security, to feel that I am in fact a part of something on the planet Earth. And I have great sympathy with people who have nowhere to go--nothing to

which to relate themselves. No wonder you're running around the street with cocaine if you don't know who your mother is or who your father is or whatever. I can really be terribly sympathetic. I've never had that problem.

Riess: That's funny, because that reminds me of Paul Smith, and that was his problem, too.

Newhall: Right, you bet it was his problem. Absolutely. I'm not sure he would ever have indicated it to anyone, but absolutely. He was never sure.

Riess: But you still would have been sure, even if you hadn't gotten the legacy.

Newhall: Mmm. My childhood--I can't explain it. I had all the security I needed from my childhood. I know that I was a human being somewhere, and there were people to whom I mattered, my mother and father if nothing else. I knew my name, and my father's name. I knew that people were very nice to us for some reason or other, usually. That's not always the case. I mean, I could sit there and know that anyone approaching me was approaching me out of friendship, and not with any kind of evil design in his heart.

Riess: I read that some member of the farming company actually wanted you to come down and buy the paper.

Newhall: Jim talked me into it.

Riess: Jim Dickason?

Newhall: The reason I bought the paper, that's where we started. That's the first question you asked me today, wasn't it?

Riess: You said, "A young Newhall Land and Farming Company executive suggested I buy the Signal as an investment in a growing paper and community." [Santa Clarita Valley Magazine interview, no date.]

Newhall: Right, that's Jim Dickason, who became the president and chairman, eventually. He was my protege, of whom I'm very proud. He started out up here in San Francisco. Remember, I said Atholl transferred his filial affection to Jim, and Jim went onward and upward.

Riess: And he didn't have any trouble getting along with Atholl?

Newhall: Jim is an interesting person. He's just retired. He's still a member of the board. He did a tremendous--well, he could handle Atholl. When Atholl would come back from a trip, he would bring Jim gold watches from Switzerland and ties from Paris and things like that. Atholl was a very lonely man. You have to remember somewhere in Atholl there must have been a residual little voice of guilt

about why he hadn't protected my father's share the way he had protected everyone else's in the family. I don't know what the problem was, I really don't. However, the luckiest thing that ever happened to me was that he didn't. I have never regretted it. I never regretted what happened because it was all perfectly legal and understandable.

But getting back to your question about why I went down there, Jim--

Riess: Are you saying that if you would have had all that money, you would have gone to seed in some way?

Newhall: I think I would have died. I don't think I would have survived as long as I have, I really don't. I've seen what it does to many, many people, not just in my family but in many families in many situations not too dissimilar. I think maybe 25 percent or more, up to 50 percent of the people with whom I associated, just by chance in college and prep school, either died suicides or just sick before their time with alcohol or drugs. Really, a great many of them just destroyed themselves. They were aimless.

I have no complaints at all. The luckiest thing that ever happened to me was to go broke. I mean it. When I say broke, perhaps I wasn't living in a cardboard carton in the street, but we had no money. Ruth and I started out with zero. My mother helped us a little bit. But Ruth has always been a good hard worker.

Financing the Purchase of the Signal, 1963

Riess: You were saying that Jim Dickason said you should come down.

Newhall: He said, "Why don't you buy the Signal?"

I was myself very active in the origins of the development of the ranch, real estate development, and that's this thing I guess we're going to get into. He said, "Why don't you buy the paper? This is going to go."

I said, "Well, that's a pretty good idea." I was at the Chronicle still. This is 1963, the year Kennedy was killed. I said, "Well, I'll look into it." As it worked out, I had to buy another paper at the same time called the Record Ledger in the town of Tujunga, which is across the hill in the San Fernando Valley up above there by La Crescenta. It turned out that the publisher of the Tujunga Record Ledger, whose name was Ray Brooks, had just bought the Signal. I didn't even know he'd bought the Signal, because the Trueblood family had owned it.

Anyway, I bought the Signal for what amounted to $60,000, and I think I paid $150,000 for both of the papers, the Record Ledger and the Signal. I showed the Newhall Land and Farming Company CPAs the financial statements of these papers. I asked, "Is this Tujunga Record Ledger making enough to carry itself?" They answered me, "Oh, yeah." Well, goddamn, as it turned out the Record Ledger was losing a fortune. I mean, what kind of CPAs were we using? We're not using them any more at the farming company, I'll tell you.

Anyway, I unloaded it, I sold the Record Ledger back to Brooks for half the price that I'd paid him, and he was dumb enough to think that was a good deal, if he could buy something back for half of what he sold it for. Well, hell, it was losing so much money I was lucky to get a dime for it. But the Signal was worth the whole thing.

Brooks had owned that paper for only about four or five months, and I came along, and I don't know why he sold it to me. He shouldn't have, but he did. I knew it had this tremendous future, but I also knew it was going to be losing money for a long time. (And I lost money on it for ten years.) So I got Jon, my son, to come down. And I got one of the kids at the Chronicle to come down as a publisher, Dave Bynum, who has now got a scucessful wine operation up in the Sonoma or Napa Valley. I was still working full-time at the Chronicle. I was just doing the Signal work out of my left hand, weekends. That's the way I got into the Signal.

Riess: Did you buy it yourself, or did the company buy it?

Newhall: Oh, no. I did, but I needed help with the financing. I figured I needed a half million dollars to make it pay in the end. I got them to guarantee a note, my personal note at the bank, for a half million dollars and that's where I got into the argument with Atholl, really, in the end. Jim said, "Oh, this is going to be a money-maker," and I said, "Hey, Jim, look this is going to take a long time." The farming company people wanted to buy the Signal and get me to run it. I said, "Forget it. I will never, ever, ever again run anybody else's property for them. If there are going to be losses, I want to take them. If there are going to be any profits, I want them."

So they took a 40 percent position and they in return guaranteed the note. I put up the rest of the money. The note came due in about five years, and I couldn't quite meet it. Atholl was mad, and he was going to withdraw the company's guarantee of the note, so that's when I sold the paper. But I made the sale on an option basis--I would keep control of the Signal for another five years. About that time, 1975--this is a very quick history of it all--the Signal began making money. But I paid the note off. I had a little argument with my son Jon. He wouldn't sign--see, I'd given

the kids all a little stock in the Signal--he wouldn't sign off his part of it. But I paid off the note within a couple of weeks of when it was due.

Atholl was really mad. And I mean, I could resent it if I wanted to, but I don't. You see Atholl was the kind of man who would never understand what a newspaper was. He could never understand that a newspaper is the only battlement, the only trench we have against the encroachments of a dictatorial society. After all, Atholl was a dictator in his own mental process. They cannot cope with debate, not even opposition. They can't cope with debate, regardless of how the debate turns out.

Riess: You said that papers don't make money. I mean, how--?

Newhall: Did I?

Riess: Well, in talking about the Chronicle--

Newhall: Oh, the Chronicle made a lot of money before I left.

Riess: I thought it was the Chronicle enterprises. It was actually the paper itself that was making money? Or were you always taking the TV stations into consideration?

Newhall: In all my discussion of the Chronicle Publishing Company I have been referring only to the San Francisco Chronicle--the newspaper.

No, no. If I did leave that impression, I didn't mean to. The Chronicle, forgetting all the rest of the enterprises, when I first became operationally involved with the running of it was losing a little more than a million dollars a year in 1952. I said it could not make money--we would not have survived on that basis only--unless we had some backing, perhaps from the TV or something. But the Chronicle itself began making money in about 1962 or 1963. See, that's nine years. And then after signing the joint agreement with the Examiner--I left very shortly thereafter--we made I think three to six million dollars a year. Then I think it went up more. Now, in 1988, they may be a little leaner. I'm totally unacquainted with their present situation.

Riess: You have said that you wouldn't go into the newspaper business to make money.

Newhall: That is correct. I've said that many times. If you're in something to make money--I'm kind of lying when I say that, but there is such an expenditure of creative energy necessary to make a newspaper work. This is not a business where you can look for a couple of smart guys and just let it develop. Newspapering is the most competitive business in the world, at least certainly the most competitive I've ever seen.

The Arrangement with the Morris Chain, 1973

Riess: But the Morris chain, they're making money?

Newhall: Maybe--maybe they're losing their shirts.

At first I wouldn't sell the paper to Morris. (This is a long story.) He came out, some newspaper broker dug him up, the Signal was not making money--this was 1972--but Morris wanted to buy the Signal.

We made a deal to sell it to him, and then he was going to hire us to run it. Ruth and Tony were both around. Before we signed it, I remember Charles Morris and I had breakfast together at a restaurant down there, and he said, "By the way, Scott, we're going to have to let some of the staff go and cut the expenses so we can get the Signal on the track to make money."

I said, "Charles, I'm not going to sell you the paper. You have to got to be willing to lose money for up to ten years if you really want this paper to be successful. I'll tell you what I'll do." (I still needed to pay off Atholl.) So I made a deal with him. Morris could buy the paper if he would lend me $125,000.

That's all I needed to pay off the rotten note. If he would lend the paper $125,000 I would give him an irrevocable option to purchase the Signal in five years. If Morris purchased it, the $125,000 would go toward the purchase price. And if he didn't buy the paper I would have to pay back the $125,000 loan, with all interest. I guess I'd give it back to him or keep it or something. The eventual purchase price of the paper would be determined, computed at the time of sale, at one and one-half times the gross annual revenue, so the longer the paper went, the higher the price went, if the revenues continued to climb. Because you had to have some kind of a formula for price in a case like that.

And so he did indeed buy the Signal after five years. Oh, I really didn't want him to. You know, at first five years seemed like a long time, but the years race by very fast, particularly if you begin to make money. The Signal began to make money--the five years were up on the first of January, 1978--the paper began to make money in about '75. Our revenues, when I sold it to him, were about $1,200,000, so that meant Morris had to pay $1,800,000 for the paper. Then Tony and I and Ruth continued to publish the Signal for another ten years. But Morris owned it. He put up a grand new plant against my advice.

Riess: Put up a plant?

Newhall: Yes. A big newspaper plant, with a printing press and all.

Riess: You mean it wasn't necessary?

Newhall: Oh, hell, I just worked out of rented quarters. When we owned the Signal we were a kind of floating crap game, literally. We owned about ten typewriters and ten desks. That was it. Then the rest of it was expenses. We rented the quarters, we rented the phones, yes, everything.

We began to make money in about '75. He paid me a million eight, over a five-year payoff. I left the Signal last year. Tony quit last year. We had a big blow-up. I don't know how much you know about this. It's an interesting story. The Signal made a net profit the last twelve months we were there of $1,679,000, and that's before taxes, but after all, you can see why I didn't want to sell it.

Riess: And you couldn't get some of the family to rally around and help you with that $125,000 note?

Newhall: No, I wouldn't. I guess I could have. But I wouldn't. But in my opinion, it was even embarrassing that I originally asked the company to guarantee my note. I can't run a paper, I would never try to, unless I have absolute total control over how I want to do it, and I cannot stand the pressure or the problems or the friction of having to have a meeting and explain to your shareholder this, that, or the other. They just end up in shouting matches; I've seen it too much at the farming company. That's why in this little paper we're starting now [Citizen] when two or three people offered me a considerable amount of money if I wanted, I said no. I said, "I'm willing to lose my own money on it, I'm not going to have to lie awake nights worrying about losing yours."

For a little paper, which the Signal was, I think that's a pretty darn good return. And if it had continued, we'd probably be making about two million this year, and so on. But the balloon will burst. I think Morris is probably not making anything now. We're locked up in a hell of a fight there, and he's giving away his advertising, and everything else. But that's a different story. [See Chapter XIII.]

Riess: I was wondering what your point was in saying that he had put in the plant, as if that was unwise?

Newhall: I wouldn't have done it, because I've never wanted to operate my own press. That is a business in itself. That is simply because of the scars from the Chronicle: San Francisco's a very highly unionized city, and of all the tough unions in the world, probably the typographers and the pressmen are the toughest. I just didn't want to cope with them. If anybody ever struck a paper I have now, I'd just shut the doors and quit. I just didn't have to cope with it. I'll pay them just about anything they want, within reason.

Riess: What did you do to turn the Signal from profitless to profitable?

Newhall: That is a long story, and I mean a long story. It's the same thing exactly as the Chronicle.

Riess: Did you do promotions?

Newhall: Same promotions, same in most cases.

Valencia--"Shangri-la?"

Newhall: The Signal and the farming company are two completely different facets or different compartments of my activity down there. They in no way overlap, except I suppose in my overall approach to the problems afflicting twentieth century American society.

Riess: Oh, juicy morsel to drop. But, on the other hand, the reason that you went down and did it was because Dickason, you said, suggested that this was a good move, to get involved in this community, that was part of your community.

Newhall: He might have figured that I could profit personally because the whole area was slated for development, and that a small paper there might, in turn, develop into something much larger.

Riess: And your part would be the newspaper package.

Newhall: Well, I was just as active with the company, too. I have had to carry a dual role, what might be described as a conflict of interest, but I've tried to never let them conflict, that's all I can say.

Riess: They certainly must conflict about development.

Newhall: You can vote one way as a member of a board of directors, and write an editorial another way as a newspaper editor, or that's the way it seemed to me.

Riess: You editorialized about it?

Newhall: At the Signal we editorialized totally much of the development. It's a very--just takes a lot of discussing, it really does. There is development and there is development.

[interruption]

The Signal story is probably just as important a story journalistically as the Chronicle, but it's not as local. It's an

interesting story. But then there is another story, as I say, about the California ranch and the way that California society is now developing. You've never seen anything like this area down there. I'm telling you. You've never seen it. Have you been to southern California lately?

Riess: I haven't driven by that area, but I'll tell you that I am predisposed to hate it.

Newhall: Yes. So do I.

Riess: And so I'm really kind of all excited to hear about it.

Newhall: Oh, it's fascinating what's happening, I think, to human beings. I'm going through a very difficult period spiritually in my own life. I thought I was going to create Shangri-la in our corner of southern California. And instead we may have created Dante's Inferno, I'm not sure which yet. It's not Shangri-la, I'll tell you that. It's interesting.

Riess: Well, and of course, if you hadn't, someone else would have, and they wouldn't have done it as well.

Newhall: Well, you have to remember the Newhall ranch part of this development is only about a third of the physical, geographical entity in which the Signal circulates. It's in the mountain basin --do you know where it is really we're talking about?

Riess: No.

Newhall: I really should fly you over in the helicopter and we'll see. It has a true identity just as much as San Francisco Bay Area does. In fact, instead of being a bay surrounded by hills, down there it's a valley surrounded by hills. Just as rugged, or more so. To see what has happened there, as a result of the billions of dollars at stake in this valley, and I say billions very purposely, is a fascinating study of the exploding West Coast, or of the American culture. It's unbelievable. The people in this valley--.

It's now called the Santa Clarita Valley. That was our first great fight: What shall the name of this place be? There was a little town of Newhall. Well, people still call it the Newhall area, because no other name so far except Valencia has really stuck.

Riess: What is Valencia, actually?

Newhall: That is the Newhall Ranch Company development area of the valley.

Riess: But it's not the same shape as the Newhall ranch?

Newhall: Valencia is the most easterly and flatter portion of the Newhall

ranch. It is what is commonly known as a master-planned "new town." I thought up the name "Valencia" after Atholl had asked me to come up with a name. It's a concept I had, and unfortunately, as I say, concepts do not always work out ideally. Valencia is not as good as I hoped. The Newhall part of the Santa Clarita Valley, that is Valencia, is not as good as I hoped it would be, but it's not as bad as I thought it might be. So, somewhere in between.

We fought and fought and fought, and I fought and fought and fought for my ideas through the paper, but not against the company. It's not as conflictive in terms of an interest as you might think. The biggest crusade the Signal got into was to turn the whole geographical Santa Clarita Valley, including Valencia, into a separate county. We fought to become a new county. We lost that. The farming company also went along on that one. Tom Lowe was president then, and he agreed. If we formed a county he'd go for it, but he'd fight against forming a city. And I agreed with him.

Riess: Was that a reasonable fight?

Newhall: Oh, hell, it should have been a county. We voted for it out there twice, by a substantial majority. But of course the rest of Los Angeles voted against it so we lost our county.

Riess: Wasn't that unprecedented?

Newhall: Yes, in recent history, sure. The politicians have set it up in Sacramento so no new counties can be formed in California. You can't do it. We voted for it out there; it won. But the whole rest of Los Angeles also had to vote in favor of it. So if you try to start a county and split off from in Los Angeles County--you can't.

Riess: Because they saw that this was a big tax base that they would lose?

Newhall: Well, that's right. That's true, you see. But the entrenched county politicians argue no, that a new county cannot be a county because it can't support itself. Then they contradict themselves saying, "Hey, we can't afford to lose this valuable tax base." I mean, it's political. And it's going to destroy California, if you realize that five individuals basically control all of Los Angeles County, as surely as the dukes in England controlled their counties in about the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, or their dukedoms, I guess you would call them.

Riess: You mean the five supervisors?

Newhall: The five supervisors. They are elected, and they have absolute total power over their areas. Each of them controls a little different acreage, about up to 2 million inhabitants in each district.

Riess: My God.

Newhall: Yes. You realize that Libya, of which we are so frightened, is only double the population of the Fifth District in Los Angeles County. I think people think of Libya as being a real country. It's an illusion. It just has a bad supervisorial district, at the moment.

Riess: Trying to turn the Santa Clarita Valley into a county--was it called the Santa Clarita Valley at that time?

Newhall: No. It was called nothing--Newhall, or the Newhall-Saugus area. It should have been the Santa Clara Valley, but there's a Santa Clara Valley up here. The Santa Clara River also exists down there, another Santa Clara River, so the first argument we ever got into was what shall the name be. And I said, "Let's call it Valencia Valley. The farming company is spending so much money promoting the name Valencia, why don't we all get a piece of the promotion action." Well, they thought no, this is a trick of the farming company. I mean it's local politics.

Riess: Who's "they" that we're talking about?

Newhall: Everybody else down there. The old guard. Because the farming company looms so big down there. It is the "villain" in the eyes of the rest of the Santa Clarita Valley. The farming company is big and it's frightening to the local people. The company is a venerable villain. Now, of course, it's becoming a generous villain.

Riess: Okay. So the farming company liked or did not like the notion of calling it Valencia Valley?

Newhall: They [the local residents] fought the name Valencia Valley to the death.

The local people hated the name Valencia Valley because they were convinced the farming company was trying to impose it on them. But, on the other hand, the farming company executives were totally opposed to "Valencia Valley" as a name for the whole area because the farming company wanted the name for themselve, alone. Think about Beverly Hills or Bel Air or Hillsborough. See, Valencia is the Bel Air or the Beverly Hills or the Hillsborough of the whole area--and these are relative terms. The new town community Valencia has turned out to be a snobbish high caste place. There is a social structure down there that is based on social and financial caste. It's just the same as it is in India or San Francisco. Or in the academic world in Berkeley.

Signal Readership, 1978

Riess: Let's get back to the Signal, and how you turned it into a profitable paper, with a great readership.

Newhall: The Signal, I think, was probably a unique paper. Many of our editorials ran on the front page. I used to write the editorials. Some were over-written pretty heavily, but they were fairly rigid or opinionated and, I hope, humorous, and we paid no attention to the existing community likes and dislikes. I wrote what I felt like and paid no attention whatever to local taste. Most of the editorials and some of the news features were somewhat or actually vastly different in approach than the contemporary press usually assumes. I think the disintegration of American editorial writing is profound, I really do.

Riess: Well, you were a front-page editorial writer.

Newhall: I used to put most of the editorials on the front page. That's the reason they read the papers, so they could have something to laugh at or sneer at or hate or sometimes like-take your choice. That's always been a technique of mine, but it's a fact.

Riess: Did that increase the circulation?

Newhall: Yes, but "readership" is a better word here than "circulation." Readership. Yes, you see, the Signal was circulated or delivered to every home in the Santa Clarita Valley. But even with this total kind of circulation our readership was very high. Last year, the fellow who owns the Signal, Morris, he sent in a general manager and I think he was trying to send a message to Tony. I think Morris was ass-deep in Newhalls and wanted us Newhalls to get out. He wanted to own his own paper. He could never bring himself to admit it, but I think so.

This new business manager hired a polling firm to make a survey. I said, "Why bother to make a survey? It's going to cost you a lot of money. I can tell you exactly what the poll is going to bring out. You're going to find out that about 90 percent or more of the respondents read this paper. That will be two or three times higher than any other newspaper coming into the area."

Well, the poll-taker comes in goggle-eyed after presenting this bill for $10,000, which to me was too much to pay. He said "You fellows don't know what you've got here. You ought to publish this survey, you ought to capitalize on this. Do you know that you've got 87.5 percent readership? In all my experience, no newspaper has ever had this. I just can't believe it."

I said, "Gee, that's swell. Will you sign a statement to that

effect, that you've never seen a paper that has the same readership we do?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know if I can do that. It might be bad for business." What a guy!

I am telling this story to demonstrate that the Signal kept its readers reading. But a great change is taking place now in the Santa Clarita Valley community and I am totally bewildered and perplexed. I don't know if the new generation of residents can be reached. I mean that, I don't know if the Signal's going to make it. I think profits may be headed down. The Signal probably went from a million and a half profit last year to possibly zero profit for the next calendar year or fiscal year.

I can't explain that exactly, except that during a period in which Morris sent out his own business manager--this was a year and a half ago--when they made the survey and stuff, after that they dropped $500,000 in profit for that twelve-month period, because of the silly expenses, including making surveys and such he was running up. Morris' new manager was there supposedly to cut the costs, and now he's gone from three-day-a-week to six-day-a-week distribution of a relatively large paper. It's not as large as the Chronicle, but the Signal, you know, is a big paper. In the end, our Wednesday editions were probably as large as the Chronicle. We'd go sometimes about 120 pages, something like that.

Riess: So people didn't supplement it with the L.A. Times; they just read the Signal.

Newhall: Well, we never, never were in competition with the Times, as far as I was concerned. We'd only use wire stories if we had to. The Signal was a totally local paper. Today the Morris people are trying to make it a big daily paper.

Riess: So why the drop of income?

Newhall: Because the Signal is being delivered free of charge to a growing population and it is being delivered twice as frequently--six days a week. They still get all the ads, but I think they're beginning to offer special inducement advertising rates. And publishing six times a week is expensive.

Television, and the World, 1989--From Bad to Worse##

Riess: Is the readership changing out there, now that the Santa Clarita Valley is more upscale?

Newhall: Economically, it's upscale. Intellectually, it's probably pretty well downscale.

Riess: [laughs] That's what you don't want on the tape.

Newhall: Well, why not? I have not too much hope for the literacy of the American citizens. The Signal's competition, if you want me to talk philosophically, is not the Los Angeles Times. The Times is a great newspaper anyway, and so is the New York Times. I get that, by the way, I get the New York Times service for the Citizen. And that's a hell of a good little newspaper--I should say big one, whatever you want, it basically is a wonderful paper. The New York Times hasn't deteriorated at all, as far as I'm concerned, over the years.

Television. Television is the great mystery, and it may destroy us.

Riess: Great mystery?

Newhall: To me it's a mystery, what its result will be. Television may destroy us. The stuff on television--I'm not talking about some of the most wonderful things in the world which have been on some of the public broadcasting stations some of the time--but the whole TV fare is more frequently a business of covering the world of news in fifteen or twenty-second bits. This is not just a joke, either. There is a non-knowledge imparted in television that's frightening, and more people and more people are watching TV, and I think fewer and fewer people are reading newspapers. I don't say fewer are getting newspapers, or buying them. But I think fewer and fewer are reading them. And I think it's very frightening.

Riess: I think it is, too, Actually, news tends to be frightening, and at the same time it's saying that this is the way the world is, and so people are just kind of more and more inured.

Newhall: Well, you've got a problem--what is the "world?" Before television, "the world" was what we got through books and newspapers and so on. And a world we actually could touch and visit, and see for ourselves. But now, the world to most people is what they see with their own eyes, on a television tube. This world is often vastly different from the reality. But it looks real. I mean, wow. It's terrifying.

Riess: It's more violent, and yet the violence is presented in a kind of movie-tone version.

Newhall: In a way, yes. Put it this way: Rudyard Kipling invented, or rather manufactured, the English upper-class (and lower-class) role model. And now television is manufacturing the American cultural role model. Therefore television is not a mirror of real behavior, the real world.

I think it's the other way around. I don't think television is

necessarily reproducing what actually happens in the world; I think rather that people are beginning more and more to live television lives, and behave the way they see people behaving on TV. I don't think the real world is quite as violent as you think it is, looking at television, but it is becoming more violent because of television. That might sound like a contradiction.

Riess: Life is even more of a struggle than television shows us, but it's not as glamorous a struggle. Television makes "pictures" out of the struggle for survival all over the world.

Newhall: That is a most apt and convincing way of stating the curse of the magic tube.

Where this always brings me is the horrible problem of population pressure, which is the basic reality in the world and probably always has been. The American people, the American society, American culture as we've known it, is disappearing, and it's disappearing rapidly. I think if you take a trip down to central Los Angeles or to Miami or to the Texas border, you will see why.

Ruth and I had the marvelous opportunity to visit and spend quite a lot of time in Mexico when there was almost a fresh beginning after the series of early twentieth-century revolutions in Mexico. It was an empty country. There were no roads there; they had just started to build the Pan-American Highway. It didn't even go through yet to Mexico City. We got down there somehow in our little baby Austin in 1934, and then traveled on horseback over the course of a couple of years.

That country--I'm sure there are more people in Mexico City today than there were in the entire country then. Mexico City was about a million when we got there, and it was crystal-clear, and it was beautiful. Maybe there were six, seven million in the whole country. The whole country had been laid waste, and they were beginning to come back. My cousin had the Caterpillar tractor agency for all of Mexico, and the Caterpillar tractor started to rebuild Mexico. Now, Mexico is becoming the greatest debtor nation in the world, despite its oil. It's a tremendous population problem. We are going to absorb the Latin American overflow whether we like it or not, I don't care how many border ditches we dig, unless we all exterminate each other somehow.

And I sit here and tell you quite frankly, I don't want to go to Miami, I just don't want to go to Florida. Apparently, things are a bit of a mess there. I don't see how our American society can assimilate all these people who are coming, and that includes of course the Asians and, oh Lord, from everywhere. I don't see how we can assimilate all of them at a speed of light without vast or revolutionary changes in our culture. I think the Asians,

incidentally, will eventually be predominant all the world over, which is probably a pretty good thing.

Riess: They've begun in China doing something about family planning.

Newhall: They've had to face it. They've lived in penury and peasantry because of non-family planning for thousands of years. They have historically solved their population control problems by killing great masses of people in wars, too.

Riess: Do you think that your concern and worry and dismay goes up every year, or is this a specially bad time?

Newhall: I'm much more aware of it than I was, and I think maybe it's a sign simply of my age, to a certain extent, and my personal disappointment or depression that I'm not twenty-one and going to be able to see all these wonderful things all over again. I'm sure that's part of it. Travel was the greatest desire that Ruth and I ever had. I was very fortunate to be able to see quite a lot of the world's surface and the world's peoples.

But today we are all homogenizing right now. There's no longer any place I really am that interested in going for travel or a visit. We were able to make a trip around the world four or five years ago, so we got to Burma and Nepal, which have not yet been totally run over by the Hilton or the Sheraton Plaza hotel people, or whatever, or with the narcotics and so on. Ceylon [Sri Lanka] is still a nice place, except it's totally uninhabitable at the moment because of political problems. But this world is pretty messed up and dreary. At least, there is no place I want to go.

Riess: Other newspapers and journalists have been paying attention to the Signal since news broke in August 1988 that the Newhalls had resigned from the paper. Why?

Newhall: I think some newspaper people got a kick and enjoyed a certain refreshing quality about the old Signal, because it was totally undisciplined, in a sense. It was a two- or three-man band. We went our own way.

I have been in a position, and it is the most important thing in my life, I have been in a position, to a certain extent at the Chronicle, but with the Signal, of writing or saying or doing anything about anything at any time that I wanted to. And nobody could say no. That has been a tremendous privilege. It has been a tremendous lot of fun. Also, believe it or not, I have some feelings of responsibility too. I sat there and wrote anything I wanted, and [laughs] I think was able to see some things quite clearly.

This whole business of life is fascinating. Well, our world

can be very absurd much of the time. I'm a fairly cheerful kind of guy most of the time. I was able to laugh more than cry. Look, how can anyone watch all this hullaballoo with a straight face, all this shouting in TV and on the front pages of the L.A. Times, the New York Times, and everything about this fellow John Tower becoming Secretary of Defense.

Riess: Yes, what do you think about that?

Newhall: What do I think about it? I'll tell you exactly. In the first place, he's a known drunk. Now, half the world are drunks. Half the guys in Congress are drunks to begin with. People don't like to accept that perhaps, but it's a fact. Everyone is calling poor old Tower "a womanizer." There's not one guy in Congress who hasn't been, if you'll forgive my words, fanny-chasing back there. How many times--I don't want to get into the women politicians because I don't know much about them--but how many Congressmen or Senators have come back from Washington with the same wife they started out with? Damn few, if you'll study it.

'This guy Tower is guilty of being a human being, just another American slob, and they're making this big to-do. The fact that he stole--or not stole, but profited from--a hundred million dollars, whatever it was, from his defense contracts, well, almost everybody's a crook, but I do not excuse that, I don't.

But the guy, Tower, is no more fit to be Secretary of Defense than a dragon. Hell, he's a warrior and a boozer. He's no more godlike than you or me or anybody else. So I came out with an editorial absolutely backing him up for the job and saying, "Let's get this thing over with and elect the booze-fighter. If I want somebody back there, I want a booze-fighter. I don't care about the rest of it." Now it made no sense. Really, it made no sense, but neither does all this goddamn--excuse me--neither does all this hypocritical Congressional investigation.

Every man sitting in that investigating committee--. I don't know if you watch it. Television is the only way to see it now. If you watch the television, I think it's Sam Nunn who's chairman, and this chief investigator is sitting in Tower's old chair. Every man in the Senate who is investigating him knows damn well what Tower is like. And they sit there, "Well, we're finding out things, we're going to have a problem."

I guess I'm impatient. I think it's hilarious, and I don't think it matters in the end, I guess, who they put in there. Maybe a chimpanzee would be better.

Riess: Well, it's like who they put in for president, that nothing of substance was dealt with.

Newhall: Nothing. Nothing. I don't know if you heard poor old Bush's speech about national budget policies and so on. And that swell guy Dan Quayle. How can you help but either get bitter or laugh or something? It's so incomprehensible.

Riess: So, do you feel better after you've written an editorial?

Newhall: Oh, no.

Riess: Does it feel good?

Newhall: [laughter] Well, it can. I've been pretty tired lately. The one on Tower was just a repetitious cliche, kind of. See, does anybody down there in the Santa Clarita Valley care if John Tower is a lush or suffering from chronic satyriasis. I've got this thing: for whom am I writing? Am I writing for myself, or am I writing for the people here? What am I doing? And I'm really in a very confused state of mind now, I honestly am, as you will find out.

Riess: If you get your readers feeling as bad as you're feeling, let's say, then do you tell them what to do?

Newhall: That's why I feel so bad. I've been in the business for a long time, and I don't know where the American people are headed. Today it seems to me the sons and daughters of the World War II American people are lazy. They're totally lazy. They're not working as hard, they have privileges and luxuries that they have not earned. They have feelings of omnipotence and omniscience to which they're not entitled. I think Americans have become a predatory and a carnivorous people, despite our love affair with being kind and--

Riess: And with being vegetarians.

Newhall: Perfect: with being vegetarians. Were I a member of the Swiss Confederation, I think I would fear above all the United States of America. I think. Possibly Iran is the most frightening force on earth--I'm not in love with Iran. The simple peace-loving American citizen, when his comforts and his luxuries are challenged, can become a very fearsome person.

The head of the CIA, Webster or whatever his name is, came out the other day and said, in public, "The CIA should play a more active part in Mexico now. Because there is a lot of political ferment down there, and Mexico's economy and the social structure are fragile." All Webster meant, of course, was that the CIA is going to go in and shore up some repressive leader. Because today the old party line Mexican presidents have a real opposition in the elections, and so on, and Mexico may be headed for another explosion. The last real Mexican rebellion was in the twenties, early twenties, and we're now in the nineties, so that's seventy years. That's a pretty long haul.

You know, it's pretty hard to be a messiah unless, of course, you have a lot of money to pay the bills, and if you don't object to being nailed up once in a while. But anyway.

Riess: I'll get back to newspapers. You said about the New York Times that it's been consistently good, and you're taking their wire service now.

Newhall: Not really the wire service. I get what they call a clipping service. I can clip anything I want in the paper and use it. See, it makes no difference to them because at the Citizen we publish only twice a week.

Riess: The press is the fourth estate. It is a power.

Newhall: The press is the most powerful thing in the world. They are the most powerful estate in the world, or can be. They are the only defense human beings have to secure their own safety, to provide for their own security, their only defense.

Of course, the first thing any tyrant does is to chop off the press of the people to stop the flow of news. And then the public has no recourse to much of anything, except bayonets or sticks. The press has just got to be careful. Today the press is playing it a little too straight-faced. I mean the working press and the editors are letting too many politicians play them for suckers. The press is swallowing too much hokum about our deficits and our economy, and about the threats of Russia and Nicaragua and China--on alternate weeks--and oil spills, and toxic garbage piles and drugs, and gun control and dozens of other popular subjects.

Now, please understand, our planet is indeed in hellish trouble, but I think the problem with the press is that both television and newspaper editors are paying too much attention to what our politicians and government agencies and high-powered business publicity agents are saying about these things, and the press, taken as a group, isn't doing enough thinking for itself.

"Somewhere between the KKK and Tombstone, Arizona"

Riess: What did the Signal do in the presidential primaries? How did you use the power of the press?

Newhall: The Signal, how much power did we have? We have been very influential, indeed, on some local things, but you've got to realize out there in Valencia, or Santa Clarita Valley, whatever you want to call it, historically the bulk of the population is drifting around

somewhere between the KKK and Tombstone, Arizona. You've got to remember that to begin with. The only way you can get to them, I've said this earlier, is to either infuriate them or entertain them or something. Out there in the Santa Clarita Valley even Dan Quayle I'm sure is too much of a liberal for most of those guys. You wouldn't believe it.

Riess: The people who are buying the million-dollar homes?

Newhall: Right. I will have to explain--I hope we can talk about this at least briefly--there are some brilliant, there are some marvelous people out there, that is true, but most of them are underground. They're out there, but they're trying to get away from all this mess we've been talking about. There are some brilliant people, engineers, a lot of guys in the movie industry and stuff like that, and the arts and so on, but they have moved out our way because they can't take the rat race in Los Angeles and Hollywood and such.

But, the 80 percent who are not so brilliant--all these blond Anglo-Saxons with derivations from Minnesota or perhaps Viking country, the fjords, or middle Germany somewhere--to them, the repeating rifle is what the Koran is to a good Mohammedan. I mean, they will shoot anything that moves if it has fur or feathers. They will buy any vehicle as long as it can run across fences and go up the gullies and canyons and break up the botanical environment.

The women flock to night club strip shows that these male animals, the hunks of men, put on. And the men love female mud wrestling matches. It's sort of Oklahoma, you know, among the hot tubs, I guess. A man out there is either a member of the National Rifle Association or he's a transvestite--and there's not much in between.

Riess: Or a male stripper.

Newhall: Yes. It's an interesting society.

Riess: But those aren't the people who are moving into the land that's been cleared for the development of Valencia, are they?

Newhall: Valencia is better than most of it. Valencia is physically really quite a nice place. There are a lot of planning and lifestyle restrictions in Valencia: you cannot park a lousy-looking car outside your home in the street, all the utilities are underground, there are pedestrian paseos in every neighborhood so you can walk to market.

Riess: Nice.

Newhall: Oh, yes, Valencia is nice.

But the rest of a lot of Valencia and surrounding neighborhoods are just ramparts of condos. These big beehive blocks are built up something like the tenements of ancient Rome. And these condos look as if they're full of laboratory experimental animals, and you could reach in one and pull out a rabbit and see what he's being tested for.

Also they live in communities behind locked gates. As an editor I don't know how to reach these people and make them read a newspaper. I'm puzzled. It's driving me crazy, basically. What is the line of communication? And I don't know if it's worth reaching them, when I figure out who they are. Why bother doing this? It's a kind of a difficult period for many reasons, now.

Riess: Had you thought of buying a television station?

Newhall: Oh, I wouldn't take one were it given to me. I'm just not interested.

Riess: I think that we ought to stop. We're being signalled. [noise in background]

Newhall: All I'm doing is rambling anyway.

XIII SCOTT NEWHALL AND BEN BAGDIKIAN IN CONVERSATION

[Interview 9: March 16, 1989]##

Newspapers--Governed by Democracy, or Personality

Riess: [to Newhall] Mr. Bagdikian has written that the journalists, the professional staff of newspapers, might consider electing their own editors. I thought that that was an interesting idea to talk about. I also want to talk about what journalism schools are doing, and your experience with journalism students, and the people you've been hiring over the years, and your own teaching at the school of journalism at Berkeley.

Newhall: My teaching at the school of journalism was purely for a year or two or three, in a practical reporting course in 1A or whatever they used to call it, in the undergraduate division. You get a bunch of young kids and tell them how to write a society story, sort of.

No, but Suzanne, you have brought up a topic about which [laughing]--we would have a fairly sharp difference.

Riess: Fairly sharp difference?

Newhall: Yes. A difference in approach. The concept of newspaper staffs electing their editors. I would think it would be the worst thing that could happen to newspapers, from a practical standpoint. I don't think democracy should be considered as a possibility, as a practical alternative in a contemporary newspaper. I think that's what's wrong with them, some of them. Well, it's been tried for many years.

I'm sure Ben knows. Wasn't the Milwaukee or Minneapolis paper for a while sort of taken over by the staff? And the Oakland Tribune might have gone through that for a while, I'm not sure. I think the last judges of a successful or good newspaper--and of course then I'll start talking about what's a successful newspaper --are the people and the kids who work on it.

Riess: You mean the last people to know.

Newhall: I think the great successful newspapers basically have been guided by a personality. I don't think they're democracies, shouldn't be democracies.

Riess: [to Bagdikian] Well, I guess you were talking about it in the context of corporate ownership. This would begin to be a cure?

Newhall: We're talking about different eras maybe, in a way, yes.

Bagdikian: I think that the Milwaukee and Kansas were employee ownership, and even that was arranged so that they weren't voting on what to cover. It was really concentrated at the management level.

No, I had something else in mind, which would be what the Observer in London does, and some of the European papers do, which is that the staff would elect the editor, not the publisher but just the head of the news operation, for a period of three years. And then that editor does what any editor does, which is to be the leader in the tone of the paper, the direction and the running of the staff.

The reason I think it would be better than what's happening now is that the money men have taken over the newspaper business. By money men I mean people who are investing in it as though it were a sardine factory. They don't care one way or the other what it does, and they'll jump off it as soon as they can make more money in tobacco. But they're under such pressure to maximize profits and they're so sophisticated now about demographics that Knight-Ridder, for example, gives its editors a map of their circulation area in which every postal zone is rated by demographics. Perfectly reasonable for circulation purposes, but it says, here are the demographics of the affluent people we want to be interested in this paper, so pick news that will be of interest to them.

Newhall: You're saying that's, as you perceive it, operating now.

Bagdikian: Yes. Increasingly, the pressure for profits go always up. These are the people who are put in as editors and as local publishers and increasingly their eye is not on that community and that paper, their eye is on their next transfer, because if they produce the profits they get promoted to go to the company headquarters or whatever.

What it means is that it's like editors in book houses now, a revolving door of people, and it reduces stability. The editors come and go, and the publishers come and go. But they're also saying very specifically to the editor, "It's not enough for you to put out a good newspaper. If this year we don't increase our ad lineage, you won't get your bonus and you'll be in trouble."

It used to be true that the good papers--I agree with you completely--took strong personalities: strong owners, strong editors, or owners who were smart enough to give an editor his head. That's being diluted in a very determined way by people who more and more are bureaucrats in editorial positions.

I think that the selection by staff would do two things. First of all, I don't think they would make worse mistakes, on the average, than management, especially remote management. And secondly, I think when it comes to reporters--if there's anything alive in a newsroom, they don't want Mr. Goody Two-Shoes, they want somebody whom they respect. It would be a separation of church and state, because if the owner in Rochester or in Miami says, "Pull that cartoon about Ed Meese because we've got a case pending," the elected editor is a little less vulnerable.

Now, I think it's a pipe dream, myself, because I think the owners should have a right to appoint whom they want, and they would have to give that up. I don't think it's going to happen. But I think that it should. I repeat it because at least it will raise the idea that the executive in the newsroom needs to be more than just a good manager. They now send editors to get MBAs, to business schools, so they can be better business managers. And I think that's as bad for the business as anything.

Riess: [to Newhall] Did you get into any of this with the Morris people?

Newhall: I've been living this life for twenty-six or-seven years. I agree with every word you [Ben] say about the corporate takeover of newspapers. I'm trying to remember, that's a rather lengthy description you gave of the problem. We started out talking about this business of electing editors as a response to this corporate takeover.

Bagd: Yes.

Newhall: I'm trying to cut it way down. I agree with everything you said, because recently I have been associated, in one capacity or another, with a corporately-owned newspaper owned by a corporation that is essentially moronic. They were smart enough to leave us alone, until a few years ago, or at least I kept them out, literally. But I question the premise of whether a successful response is for staff to elect or provide their own editors.

The corporate ownership, be it a person or committee or whatever, I agree--no, I shouldn't say I agree. There are all kinds of grades and shades, colors and shades of corporate owners. The so-called bottom line is in a sense what they're interested in, but there is still fantastic ego content among some corporate owners. There are so many people who set themselves up as corporations who

are running papers just because they want to be publishers. This is an aspect of American journalistic professional life that perhaps not too many people are close to.

Riess: Part of the American dream, that anyone can run a newspaper?

Newhall: A publisher or editor has immediate social status. He has immediate superficial power. He is immediately an important person with an identity in the community. And a lot of guys are publishing papers that should long ago have died. Let's run down the line: the San Francisco Examiner has no reason, no corporate business reason, for existence. The Los Angeles Hearst paper is worse. The Los Angeles Times is probably making money, or a lot of money, I don't know. You may know more about that than I do. But they have such immense wealth behind them.

Young Otis Chandler, who I guess is not so young now, wanted to put out a successful newspaper and--this is my personal opinion--wanted to be seen, perceived as a great significant figure in the newspaper world, and I think he's done a wonderful job in building up a great newspaper. I'm quite a fan of the L.A. Times.

There's also down there something called the Daily News. That used to be a throw-away, the Green Sheet. Now the Chicago Trib people took it over, and then Jack Kent Cook, who owned the Washington Senators, and the Lakers, bought the News. He's pouring millions of dollars into a paper and doesn't know where they're going or what they're going to do. He's got on his staff some strange cats that are in corporate positions. They come and they go. I don't know if they know what they're doing. They [Daily News] come out in competition to us. By "us" now I'm saying the Signal or the Citizen, which is this little paper I've started.

The reason I'm so sensitive and responding in a strange way is that as I'm sitting here talking to you today, I have to make up my mind whether or not I'm going to close up this paper I've started, because of the economic pressures involved. I've always operated a paper where I've felt that--I'm not answering your question now directly. A paper in the old-fashioned way depends sort of on a personal leadership, a direction of something, and telling it, as they say in the trade, as you see it.

Morris has hired himself an editor who is in my opinion a pretty typical psychotic, investigative reporter--probably smart, but all he wants to do is the so-called investigative reporting, and he has such a thrust in him to do this that the facts don't get much in the way of what his investigation really does or does not uncover. I don't want to personalize this, but it's fascinating to me. His wall is covered with these plaques, you know, with the simulated mahogany with the little brass things on it with the engraved things. He just won a headline award.

You made a very perceptive remark, that there's a whole generation of guys or women in this business who are just going step by step onward and upward from weeklies to semi-weeklies to dailies, small dailies and large dailies. It's a strange new breed and generation of people--and I'm not saying necessarily coming out of journalism school--but investigative reporting as such has become such a fetish that they've forgotten what it really is. I've always wondered why the word "investigative" is always in front of the word "reporting" these days. I mean, the spirit of reporting basically should be kind of investigative.

Riess: From what I've seen of the weekly papers, that is what they end up doing, just biting off one investigative issue per week. That's how the East Bay Express in Berkeley works.

Did Morris bring this editor in?

Newhall: No. He was brought in by a woman staff reporter. You know, we had a split-up with them about six or eight months ago. I had sold Morris the paper in a long involved option and sale in 1978, with my son staying on as publisher. Morris, who owns the Signal, lives in Savannah, Georgia. The Signal was always considered a Newhall paper, and Morris had no identity with it. I think there was a certain problem of status as far as he was concerned, and it came to the parting of the way. We made Morris an awful lot of money. The Signal was very successful.

Riess: Is that why he stayed out of your business?

Newhall: I guess so. I wouldn't let him hurt the paper. He'd want to cut costs or he'd want to do this. I said, "Look, Charles--" I first of all refused to sell him the paper until it was making enough money so he'd be satisfied. I said, "You let me take the losses," which I did. Then when I sold it to him, I came out about even on it; it didn't bother me one way or another. The Signal comes out six days a week now.

Newspapers and Development in Southern California

Newhall: I don't know if you know this area or not. You know San Fernando Valley and up north there. Our area is a boomtown, it's the fastest growing community, I guess, in the United States, if not the world. We've gone up now to about 150,000 in about fifteen years from about 15,000. We're now having this fight with the Los Angeles County people--. It's an involved situation. The Newhall Land and Farming Co. is putting up another ten or twenty thousand houses, and there are more of them around.

This pristine, to me, beautiful southern California countryscape--I fought for years to try to have it at least reasonably well-planned so that life wouldn't turn into just a jumble of condominiums full of people watching TV all day. And I see the whole thing collapsing now with this fantastic thrust of white flight population coming north across the hills. Morris wants to capitalize on it. He thinks, gee, just because a lot of people are coming there, they're all going to read papers, and papers will therefore get advertising, and everybody will get rich.

Riess: When you had the Signal that was, I thought, what you were trying to do, influence planning and so on.

Newhall: Yes, that's right. Because of my personal involvement with the land down there, I had wanted to build Shangri-La. Any kid does. And now the town of Valencia, the part that our family company is building, is really not that bad. It's not as nice as I had hoped, it's not as bad as it might have been.

But we are being encircled by a ghetto, a sub-yuppie ghetto, that's all I can call it. They're people who are interested only in what car they drive. Can they meet the payment on their plastic credit cards? Are they able to afford their home? (I'm jumping from papers now to building a community.) We build 100 or 1000 homes, and they're all sold three times over before you break the ground to put up the next house. So then you end up with a community of that nature.

I guess the reason I'm spending my time on this is because in America the population boom is having a fantastic effect on newspapers. By that I mean I think we are facing an illiterate or semi-literate community in years ahead. We're putting out a paper, we're doing our best, we're trying to cover some of the problems--the Citizen, now. The Signal [laughing] with its investigative two or three lead reporters or editors or whatever, they are digging up investigative crises. One of them is "The School Buses are Dangerous", "The Sheriff Ignores 911 Calls." Most of such stories that they've done have been inaccurate at best and untrue at worst. They've been in this frenetic thrust to come out with headlines, good black metropolitan headlines.

Riess: Isn't this the equivalent of your promotions, though?

Newhall: No, because these "investigative" Signal stories are simply incorrect and frightening. They have had I think a very damaging effect on the community's stability.

Riess: Well, I mean, would they say that it is just to increase circulation?

Newhall: No, I don't think it's that simple. I think the present Signal editors want more plaques on the wall. They want recognition for having exposed "these terrible ills of society," and they're forgetting the serious ill of society which is the growing functional illiteracy of a great many millions of gullible people who do not have the time or the energy to read. I think newspapers are losing touch with the human beings in this country, and I think we're in terrible, terrible danger. I know this is sort of rambling, and I apologize.

Bagdikian: Scott, I wonder what you think of this: First of all, newspapers generally have been for development because it's meant rising population, more money, better advertising.

Scott: That is correct.

Bagdikian: And I think the emphasis in the news has followed that, that "what's good for the builders is good for the paper." Or that it's good for the town, but in fact it's also good for the papers in terms of revenue.

And they've done something else, it seems to me. In a very natural way--because I don't think this is the result of a conspiracy of evil people--they have spread out geographically, so there are no more place names in newspapers anymore. I think two-thirds of California papers have no city in their flag. They spread out because it's the advertising base, but they don't cover the day to day things in the communities they cover. And one of the reasons I believe that newspapers are losing their per capita readership at a really frightening rate--they haven't got off 63 million total for twenty-five years--is that what really gets people reading the newspaper, I think, is not schlock--most people are not dumb, or semi-illiterate--but the things that are close to their lives that they care about. And what are they? The neighborhoods, the schools, what the zoning board is going to do to that road next to my house. Bread and butter coverage in a town is not just the big spectacular investigation, but it is what makes people begin reading.

My theory of how you get a reader, my soap opera theory, is that the reader reads that the school board is thinking of closing the school that their child goes to. They begin reading what the school board does. First thing, they know the characters on the school board, and they know what's going on, and they pick up the paper the next week or the next day, because they're going to get the next chapter. They're involved.

I think the trouble is that the philosophy of coverage of papers now is, get the big socko story every now and then, but don't cover the day-to-day things, because nobody cares. I don't think it's true that nobody cares. I think now that there are thousands

of communities in this country that have no systematic way of finding out what happened in their own community. I think that's how a newspaper readership is sustained, by getting them involved in the things that they know about personally and care about.

Newhall: I wouldn't disagree with you at all. That's what we've tried to do --both at the Signal and the Citizen--for twenty-five years. All anybody cares about down there right now is roads and schools. But why have they got roads and schools in the shape that they're in? Because they haven't paid any attention or given a damn for twenty-five years, while the big tract developers came along and built tracts without schools, built homes to which the only access sometimes I guess is by helicopter.

I feel that total frustration of the ability to reach these people. I'll give you an example. Let me repeat: this is what we've been covering, either in the Signal or the Citizen, for twenty-five years. Today, under Morris, the Signal now wants to be a daily to compete with something or other. They are trying basically to fill up the paper, so half the stories are just faked up. I mean they're not really to the point of what's going on. You don't need a six-day or seven-day paper there in that community right now.

I have felt that a newspaper, a literary product, a written product is so important that we circulate the Citizen to everybody in the valley. That's 44,000 homes. When you have to deliver 44,000 papers twice a week--have you ever seen 44,000 papers dumped on the ground in front of you that you have to fold and band and deliver, free? I think the day of a paid small paper being a viable vehicle for an advertiser is almost down the tubes, I really do.

Bagdikian: Why do you think that?

Newhall: Because the Signal, which we used to also deliver everywhere, 40,000, believe it or not, three times a week, the old Signal was interesting enough a paper that we had voluntary pay, and we ran the voluntary paid circulation up almost 40 percent at one time.

Bagdikian: And if they didn't subscribe, they'd get it anyway?

Newhall: They'd still get it. They'd get it anyway. Everybody in the community got it.

Bagdikian: How do you explain that?

Newhall: Because it was a hell of a good paper, and it covered all these things. We told our readers in shocking terms, or comic terms, or insulting terms, what was wrong with them or their community, and what the problems were. And they thought, yeah, gee, that's right. And at least they read it for amusement if nothing else.

Bagdikian: Isn't that an overwhelming attraction to an advertiser, that here are people that don't have to pay, and they pay anyway?

Newhall: The Signal was fantastically successful. The month we left, twelve months preceding, we sent Morris $1,600,000 in profit. Now, eight months later, I think he's probably lucky if he's breaking even.

Bagdikian: What caused the change?

Newhall: He has gone to six days, so his cost of circulation has doubled. We were three days. He's had to hire, I suppose, -some high-priced people to replace us. We were working basically for nothing, because we felt that it was our paper.

Riess: You mean Ruth and Tony.

Newhall: Yes, Tony was getting paid fairly well. But our staff were being paid like coolies. Toward the end it got so uncomfortable--the Morris people toward the end would call from Savannah and just say, "Send us some more money." You see, he [Morris] has a chain of about twenty absolutely junk weekly or little daily papers that lose money, most of them. We were the number one money-earner of the chain. And then he has a few of these mysterious TV stations he can pick up, he thinks, for a dime on the dollar.

Riess: Why was the staff paid like coolies?

Newhall: Well, Ben can tell you that. The young people have to go to work somewhere when they get out of school. When I say coolies, we paid them anywhere from $300 to $400 a week, with the top person getting $400 a week.

Bagdikian: There are profitable daily papers that pay their reporters $200 and $300 a week. The median starting salary on daily papers last year was $13,000 a year.

Newhall: Yes, I know, but I never taught Morris that.

Well, all right, on the Citizen, now, this is a little paper that Ruth and I started with our own money, and we're going everywhere. I pay the Citizen staff a dollar less than they got at the Signal. We have had a lot of legal problems, and most of our staff came from the Signal, but they're probably averaging $400 to $500 a week, the staff, maybe closer to $400, I don't know. And it's pretty expensive out there where we live, most of them can't afford to live in the Santa Clarita Valley. This is an upper middle class kind of area. Affordable housing is probably a $250,000 house or something, which is still quite a lot of money. I'm losing--well, this is pretty confidential--but sitting here I'm losing a lot of money a week trying to put out a newspaper. To be a messiah, to

amuse and entertain and advise the world. I'm just not going to go on forever.

Morris I really think probably has gone from a million and a half in profits to either a break-even point or maybe even losing money. And then you've got the Jack Kent Cook crowd sort of hovering over Morris, and I imagine they're also dumping a lot of money.

Money: "A newspaper is not a sausage factory"

Bagdikian: Tell me something, Scott, you were making money on that paper?

Newhall: A lot of money.

Bagdikian: Good money.

Newhall: The paper was making money, not old Dad.

Bagdikian: So they come in, and I would assume that they have a natural interest in how this money gets made. Why do they kill the goose? Why do they screw things up?

Newhall: I can't tell you, except that I think it's totally a matter of ego, or whatever are the words they use now, self-esteem.

Bagdikian: You know, the same thing happened on the Peninsula.

Newhall: Excuse me--I'll finish after one sentence. It was not Morris' paper as far as the world was concerned, it was our paper. It was always Newhall, Newhall, Newhall. Ruth was the editor, Tony was the publisher, and I was kind of the ancient mariner or Banquo's ghost at the feast, and that was the situation. And I just don't think Morris could take it any longer. He sent a general manager in to report directly to him, because he wanted to think that Tony didn't know how to run the paper. The general manager was there, it was a horrible period. And in the year the general manager was there, before he finally was tossed out, the profits went down by about $750,000.

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Bagdikian: I'm surprised that, although this is a newspaper company that bought it, that they really don't understand that it's not a pickle factory or a nut and bolt plant, that a newspaper is a peculiar animal.

Newhall: Well, when I sold the paper to Morris finally in 1977, I did an editorial, because I smelled that all this was coming. And in the

editorial I said literally "a newspaper is not a sausage factory." That was the title of the editorial. And I was trying to send a message to Morris to lay off and hang in there and make some money. I think as I said at the time, in that editorial, the first thing chain owners do is fire the society editor and hire an assistant bookkeeper with a quill pen or a computer, and then pretty soon they're going to start losing money. I wrote it all out. But it worked out the way it worked out.

I think historically we had about reached the end of our swing anyway with this strange tank-town paper. The Signal was, I suppose, a kind of unique, semi-country newspaper. Our whole thrust editorially was slow development, slow development, better planning, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. " You're going to have traffic problems." "There's not enough water." It was all written out, and nobody has paid much attention, because now the area is full of dozens and dozens of people who are making a fortune out of the pillage, the rape of this land.

The biggest business in town is real estate brokerage. The real estate brokers are making millions. The developers are making more or less millions. The merchants, therefore--we are overmerchantized--they are all cashing in on the cash, or on the credit cards at least, that are in circulation around the community. The realities of the area are that the local people who would follow us and read the Signal and say, "Gee, you've got a great paper, you're right, we just don't want this to happen to us," the next thing you know they're out there buying four or five acres, and they want to get in on the cash that's available. There is this perpetual American credo of personal gain.

Riess: [to Bagdikian] When you and I talked on the phone you were saying that one of the questions you would wish to put to Scott would be about, and I scribbled down some of your words, "In the editor lurks the dream, frequently an illusion, of leading the community. The editor gets the chance"--the Signal--"and then the romantic goal meets the reality of advertisers."

Newhall: We had no problem with advertisers by the time I sold the paper to Morris.

I bought the Signal for I forget how much, not much. The purchase price was $60,000 or $90,000. It was a paper that had been founded in 1919. I lost money on it, about half a million dollars I guess--or six hundred thousand dollars. I sold Morris an option--to do this quickly--in 1972 because I had to pay off the money I put into the paper. I'd had some trouble with our local Newhall Land and Farming Company because I had attacked, in editorials, some things and totems that the then more prestigious directors admired. They had guaranteed the note I signed for the money to buy and operate the Signal, and I had to pay it off.

So I sold Morris the paper. We had made a deal, but hadn't signed it, and Morris suddenly said, "Okay, Scott, now--" and the deal was made on the basis of one-and-a-half times the gross revenue in this paper--"now, we've got to make this paper pay, so we've got to start cutting here and there on the staff." I said, "Charles, wait a minute. You can't do that. You're going to lose the paper. You've got to be willing to sustain losses for a while, and you'll do well." I knew what was going to develop, so I said, "I'll make you an option deal." I gave him a five-year option that he could exercise at the end of five years. I said, "Let me keep the paper until it breaks even or makes money, let me take the losses, and then you can have it."

By the time I sold it to him, we were probably making 10 or 15 thousand dollars profit a month, and that seemed to satisfy Morris enough to keep him out of town. And he bought it. And then we operated, and there was a steady increase in profit. As I say, I think it was $1,679,000 for the last fiscal year, about the time Tony left--1988. A year before, the profits had dropped off dramatically when we had this swell corporate general manager. He just was in the way; he was a nuisance.

So then I said, "Well, you know, if they're going to run the paper this way with their corporate people, I can start up a paper here, and surely the advertisers and the public are going to want it." With the Citizen--this is the other paper--we started twice a week. (Morris went to six days a week.) And we've been really quite successful in a way, except we're losing a hell of a lot of money. I'm not sure--. If I had a lot of money, and by that I mean maybe four or five million dollars, I wouldn't have to worry, and we could, I think, eventually take over. I really do, except I am discouraged with the world at large right at this moment.

Bagdikian: What would you do with four or five million dollars?

Newhall: Put out a good community newspaper and take losses for about five years. Morris is knocking us out by undercutting us. Every time we get an advertiser, he'll come in with lower rates under his card rate and undercut us. It's probably illegal.

I also guess I might as well mention one of the most important aspects: Ruth and I worked out a non-compete agreement for ten years with Morris. For ten years we could not work for any other publication in the circulation area. That agreement expired last year. My son Tony--Morris wangled it around when he got Tony's stock that Tony's non-compete agreement would not start until he was terminated or until he left the paper. So then we went to court, and I've been in a tremendously expensive lawsuit. I think Tony's agreement is a defective non-compete agreement. This is not of too much interest to the public at large, but Morris succeeded in

getting a restraining order which we are now appealing, and Tony is not able to work on our paper. So Ruth and I, and we are both of us slightly over twenty-one, are sort of staggering along with the Citizen, doing our damndest.

Riess: If you had the four or five million, what could you do with the Citizen? It sounds like you just gave up in a way on being able to deal with the community you were serving.

Newhall: Well, Morris is committing suicide with his paper. I think he's going to go under. These papers come and go, and Jack Kent Cook, he'll go under probably. The Times, I think, will go on forever. Unless they really screw it up. The Times is a very elaborate corporate structure now. You probably know a great deal more than I do about it.

Bagdikian: I was going to say, you're right. I think Otis is probably mostly concerned with the overhead.

Newhall: No, I think he's rather more remote from it. But I have to hand it to him for permitting his paper to--he spent millions on that paper. I have to hand it to him.

Bagdikian: Well, I have great respect for him, as a person. He was the kid who came in and withstood all kinds of pressures while making it into a real newspaper.

Newhall: That's right. Even Stanford, once in a while, graduates a successful man. [Bagdikian laughs] How about it?

Anyway, I apologize for getting off into this, but this may be a facet of contemporary, at least southern California, journalism you're not totally familiar with.

Bagdikian: Well, I'm fascinated and depressed. My son is an editor on the Bakersfield Californian.

Newhall: Oh, well, our former managing editor, who quit in disgust over something Morris did, I forget what, I think it was this new general manager that he brought in, is now working on the Bakersfield Californian. No, it's the Fresno Bee.

Bagdikian: In Bakersfield they have their own trouble. The owner died.

Newhall: What family was that?

Bagdikian: That's the Fritz.

Newhall: I didn't know them.

Bagdikian: They have a terrible male disease in the family in which at age

forty or forty-five, the men become non-compos and they die. They ran out of sons--one of them is still alive--and the mother took over, sort of held on, and now she's just died. She had a daughter who lives in New England. The business people don't know much about newspapers, so the news staff is shoring things up, and hoping that the daughter of the family will take it over.

Newhall: Bakersfield has had its own unique economic problems, as you know, with the oil industry and that.

But I think that not too much separates us in our view of the realities and the responsibilities of a newspaper, and I think one of the responsibilities is survival, and integrity, and as I say, this corporate thing on which you have expounded I agree with absolutely. It's a terrible thing that's happened to American people. I just wish I hadn't sold this thing to Morris--but I had to.

The Audience: Readers, or Television-watchers

Bagdikian: Don't you think that one of the things that is true of a newspaper --it's true of some other businesses, but it's just peculiarly true of newspapers--is that, yes, it has to survive, economically, but it has to become in a very special way a part not just of the community, but of people's daily life in a profound way. You don't do that overnight. And what's to me the most valuable thing that any newspaper has, is that someone is moved to go out on a rainy day and pick up a paper out of the driveway because they want to see what's in it. In modern life, that's an enormously valuable commodity.

These bushwackers who come in and buy it up because they're collecting them like bottlecaps don't understand that. They come in--"We're going to change a lot of things"--and what they're doing is changing an element that somebody's built into their daily life, and that the community has.

You change that, it seems to me, very carefully, and with great sensitivity. An outsider who comes in, probably under pressure to maximize profits, and sees it as a great managerial opportunity, is fooling around with an organism that ought to be approached with care and humility. But the big fast buck investors come in with profit maximization, and with scorn for what looks like an excessively personalized running of newspapers.

Newhall: I go along with you completely. The problem that I run across, practically, is that today--I'm afraid a very small percentage of the people are willing to walk outside in the rain and pick up any

newspaper that's chucked there, particularly if they have not paid for it.

Bagdikian: Do you think that's basic, or do you think it's because a lot of new communities, and new families, have not grown up with the idea that the paper's in the house every day?

Newhall: I think so.

Bagdikian: And they get it from television.

Newhall: I was going to get into television.

Bagdikian: And they think they know everything because they watch television.

Newhall: Well, you know, fifteen seconds can give you a hell of a broad view of the United States history, can't it. [laughs] We could hold forth on that for the hour!

Bagdikian: Do you think that there's going to be a reaction against it, and eventually a generational recognition or boredom with television, and we'll go back to wanting to know something more than what we get from television?

Newhall: I live in perpetual hope.

Riess: [to Bagdikian] Do you think that?

Bagdikian: There's a percentage of the audience that's getting bored with television.

Newhall: I think there's a backlash underway right now, I really do. You see different sorts of little pieces of it bubbling up here and there, like this woman who's yelling about "Married With Children," which I haven't been able to see yet.

I was not going to bother just to screech about television [laughter] but I see on television such stuff that I wouldn't believe was possible in our generation. I wouldn't. The horror, the violence, the death--. I've seen my granddaughter sitting there looking goggle-eyed at a television show in which the parents literally had armed themselves--I don't know if the parents had come here from Mars and were adopting the bodies of earthlings or not--and they were shooting their children with machine guns. I don't think that's awfully good fare. And I am not exaggerating.

Bagdikian: I'm sure you're not. I think it's a scandal. I think it conditions the whole population from the time their eyeballs focus, and this is quite aside from what it does to newspapers, which I think is not a good thing. What it does, by giving a sensory jab every few seconds, is produce a short attention span. And one of the effects

is to make you impatient with print.

Newhall: Yes. I don't know what the threshold of attention is, or what's happening to it.

Riess: You get people in journalism school who've been out working, and then they come back, and they decide to get a degree. What is their future?

Bagdikian: We aren't typical. We are a graduate school, deliberately small. We take forty students a year.

Newhall: And you get very superior people, I'm sure.

Bagdikian: Well, we do. And they're not just superior academically. We're not terribly enthusiastic about the 4.0s, because they've been grade-grinders. But I think we are overstocked with journalism schools. We overproduce. And what's happening to most journalism schools is that the money is in advertising and P.R., and now those schools teach all of that--communication theory, advertising, P.R., and journalism--and the journalism part is getting smaller and smaller.

When students ask me, I tell them, you don't have to go to journalism school to become a good journalist. About a third of the people who start every year have not gone to journalism school, but they have some college degree, which I think is superior, rather than just journalism training alone.

The good people I know are basically interested in doing a good job. They're much more socially aware than I was when I started. They see the role of the paper as being much more important than I ever thought of when I started in newspapers. But I think they get socialized very quickly by whatever organization they're in because what do we all want? We want to get on Page One, and if certain things get on Page One every day, after a while you build that into your system. You don't bother with some things; you do with others.

Newhall: Too many by-lines.

Bagdikian: Well, I think it has become very personalized. And another thing, I think one thing that never happened before, certainly not to this degree, is the reporter as celebrity. It's partly the investigative thing. And once you do that, it seems to me you start being--you do different things than you would do if you were just being a good reporter.

Riess: Maybe they're trying to meet television on its own ground though, in that way. Talking about personalities, we all seem to know the shifts in the casts of characters on the television news, but you never know in a newspaper who's shifting around.

Newhall: You never know, you just see a new set of by-lines. But I say there's too many by-lines. It's the custom now to give everybody on your staff a by-line. They put their by-line stories in their scrap book so they can go onward and upward to the next paper. And when I was in the business--this is a horrible way to start anything--a by-line was a great thing. You got a by-line when it was something that was above the ordinary. Now one of these blonde girls, you know, with the lapel jacket, comes in to go to work as an investigative reporter, and she'll get a by-line when she's done a six-paragraph story on something or other telling the world that the bus was late. Just nothing, nothing. It's a problem. Ruth says the only way you can keep them is give them a by-line.

Bagdikian: Well, don't you think part of that comes from the emphasis television puts on personalities?

Newhall: Yes.

Bagdikian: On television, anybody who stands there in a newscast and reads a badly-written piece is suddenly known to the whole community. [laughter]

Newhall: Look, this is killing me. I really have a hard time turning on a news show now and watching it anymore, because if I turn around with my back to the thing, I can't tell you which female or which male voice it is, who it belongs to. Every woman on television has the same voice--I don't know if you've noticed it or not--they pronounce things the same way. And the men are pretty much the same. I am not sure there is any mental process taking place in television newscasting. I think the news stories are coming straight into the eyes and going directly to the mouth. They don't go through the brain of the newscasters. But anyway, we all face that. I think it's the major problem, perhaps, that's affecting our whole newspaper problem.

Fostering Cowardice and Violence

Riess: We have just had a lot of headlines about Alar on apples and cyanide in grapes--

Newhall: We're living in a world of cowards in which one's own precious skin is of such fantastic value. The good old salt-of-the-earth Americans will believe anything, that cancer is going to strike them, that there are germs and things around that are going to kill us all. We now see where the people have been so traumatized by television and oversimplified newspaper reporting that they will believe stories that our food supplies are poisoned, that two poisoned grapes from Chile may wreck either the Chilean economy or

our economy, our apple crop may be wiped out because of something that nobody knows exactly what it is.

I have to give it to the poor old Chronicle, which at times has been criticized, they do a pretty good job at trying to find out what this stuff supposedly is on the grapes, and what it really is going to do to you. But in the meantime, you've got people keeping their children home from school because they think there might be an apple core on the floor of the bus or something. I mean, I think our nation is half out of its mind.

Riess: What would your editorial be?

Newhall: Well, to be honest, I would have to think about the plot of an editorial on this subject for a long time, maybe forty-five seconds, or maybe even fifteen minutes. I would probably fake by at first by suggesting: "Give your apples to the teacher and let her worry about it."

Today I am convinced there is simply too much national credulity or panic or whatever, lack of leadership, I think, among intelligent newspaper editors and publishers and an intelligent television leadership. Television has such a fantastic capacity for good, for education, for entertainment. Yet for reasons that Ben knows better than I--I don't know much about the television business--they are filling their screens up with slop, anything that will catch the attention of an adolescent or juvenile public.

Riess: Well, what about television? Is it harmful physically?

Newhall: I think the overwhelming evidence is that the violence on television does in fact have an enormous effect in real life.

Bagdikian: I just read a study. This generation, the baby boomers, who are the first generation that has watched television at its intense development, from about late fifties to early sixties, has lower savings, more homicide, and more instant gratification than any generation before. I think television is the biggest single influence on that. When you look at the skills that go into television advertising and the putting together of the shows it's frightening, because it is attention-fixing, and the one purpose is to get your attention, because that's the most valuable commodity you have. I used to think that the hysteria over ratings was ego, but one rating point on a network is worth thirty million dollars of revenues a year. That's why they fire people who lose a point of ratings.

The result is this powerful instrument with the most highly-paid and sophisticated people who put together the commercials. The programming that supports the commercials and so forth, bang bang bang, crashes and so forth, so you won't change channels, I think it

has at the very least numbed people. Worse than that, I think it's created a norm of violence and gratuitous sex and violent sex--it isn't all just a fantasy that people dismiss. We know that a lot of people confuse television with the real world.

Presidents and Television

Newhall: I agree with every word of that. It's a restatement of an old axiom: "ontogeny recapitulates philogeny." Today I think many, many individual people are living according to the role they perceive on television. I don't think the role on television is necessarily built on the real actions of real people. Ronald Reagan was a master of establishing a behavior pattern for Americans. When he was at his greatest, embracing the bereaved families in a navy aircraft hanger somewhere during the funeral rites for the survivors of a crash or the Marine bombing victims or something, Reagan was living an American movie scene. It had nothing to do with realities of the matter.

Now, we are left today--I don't want to get political about all this--but now we are going to reap the harvest of Ronald Reagan. And I don't know if Bush is going to be able to maintain his sanity when he realizes the enormity of Ronald Reagan's legacy, which is that we've gone bust. Now, we're going off into another subject, but Ronald Reagan was an actor, not a president, like him or not.

Riess: You mean morally bust, or what kind of bust?

Newhall: Oh, I think morally certainly, but also financially.

Bagdikian: Nixon wrote a very interesting thing a couple of months ago about the television coverage of the campaign, how terrible it was, and how coverage of Nixon was so bad during Nixon's years as president. And he said something which I think is perfectly true. He said, "Reagan learned how to beat television news at its own show-biz."

Newhall: That's right. He set the stage for it.

Bagdikian: He knew exactly, and his people knew the erogenous zones of television, and played them.

Newhall: Nixon, you say, wrote this? I didn't see it, but it's so true. If you will go back in your papers now, and TV, you will see a picture of Ronald Reagan probably in 95 percent of the editions of the Los Angeles Times or the New York Times or the Chronicle--not so much the Chronicle maybe. On TV, every show, there's the president doing something. I don't think you'll see a picture of Bush once a week now. The guy's disappeared.

This is not germane really, to what we're talking about, but I just do want to make the observation I think George Bush is facing a very serious period of--I don't know what the modern medical term is, but just sort of anxiety or panic. I think this guy's got problems, real problems of what to do. He's suddenly here as president, he's chairman of the board of a company that I think is losing more money than even the Newhall or Santa Clarita Valley Citizen is [laughter], and here I'm sitting half out of my mind trying to figure out what to do about it.

Bagdikian: He's got no room to move around in.

Newhall: He's been rebuffed and he wants to be liked. I think the American people really are facing a very interesting, if not deadly, few years. I don't know.

Bagdikian: One of the things I think that may have been the legacy of the Reagan years is the accentuating of making it personally at the expense of your obligation to the rest of society. It's suffused everything. "I've got mine, Jack, screw you." That was the message for all those years. You lose a sense of community responsibility, of national responsibility. And I don't think that's inherent in people, I think you can draw out good things in people.

One of the terrible things that television does is not merely to portray a few 100 percent monsters--there's a little bit of monster in all of us. It not only stimulates the most superficial gratifications, the sex and the violence and materialism that we all have, but it enlarges it in the world around us. I think there were other times in which there were authority figures of some kind--whether it was a school teacher, when they were authority figures, or the president of the United States, or the local preacher--who were constantly encouraging a sense of obligation to one's fellows. And where do you hear that now? You watch television, seven and a half hours a day, say "Buy it."

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Newhall: A lawyer whom I admire very much once told me--he was a trial lawyer--he said, "If you have to win a jury, don't ever let them think that you're telling the jury what to think about your client. Just set it up so that the jury thinks that they discovered that your client is an innocent man, and you're not telling them he's innocent." If you start going around exhorting people to do this that and the other, you're going to get nowhere. I think you have to either kid them into thinking it is their idea; give them some stuff and let them make up their minds.

Riess: That's a very subtle program.

Bagdikian: I don't think it's unmanageable at all. I agree. And what I think is important is that television has to deal with one great big audience. And you make certain assumptions about one great big audience. You don't give anybody their first choice. You give them their fourth or fifth. Newspapers can give people their first, second, third, fourth, fifth choice. If a newspaper prints something that's for the people interested in education, and you're not interested, you move your eyeball, and so forth.

Community Newspapers

Bagdikian: I think an audience for a newspaper, and for broadcasting for that matter, consists of groups of people, each group having its own priority of interest. And those groups generally are intelligent about what they care about. An auto worker wants to know what's going to happen in making automobiles, and a broker wants to know what's going to happen in the stock market, etc., etc. But the minute you homogenize them all, you're not going to give anybody those things that primarily interest them, affect their lives, and inform them about the outside world that affects their lives. You're giving them mushy stuff that may affect it a little bit, but not much. I think we're starved for some emphasis in our news about those things that truly make a difference in all our lives, instead of the jazzy stuff or the weather.

Newhall: Well, what does make a difference in our lives? It's different for every person.

Bagd: Except that mutuality in every community which seems to fade from the media these days, what one does about the schools and about the things that we all mutually support.

Newhall: They all care about schools, but when it comes down to their interest in reading the paper and following the story, it's only if their school is involved.

Bagdikian: Well, isn't that good enough?

Newhall: Yes, but if you have fifty schools, then you have fifty different sub-groups, don't you?

Bagdikian: Yes, but somebody has to say, "Your school isn't going to work unless you're willing to pay for the whole system." Who says that?

Newhall: We have said it for twenty-five, thirty years, and nobody pays any serious attention--they will not vote for it. The latest trick down south around Valencia to get some money for schools--you know Proposition 13 hasn't exactly turned us into a utopia here in

California--was to pass a tax fee on all new homes. Nobody who lived there had to pay any more school fees; just the people who built new homes would have to pay school fees. That tax proposition of course passed, because the only voters were people to whom it would not apply. I took an editorial position against it, to everybody's anger. I said, "Look, it's unconstitutional to begin with." But, of course, it passed, oh, overwhelmingly. Most of the local people said, "Look, we're doing this for our community," and I just said, "Bullshit. You're doing it for yourselves, so you won't have to pay the tax, or the fee for the new schools."

The appellate court, I think, threw it out. It was unconstitutional. We can't get the general public down there to participate in a tax program, or a fee or tax program, or bond district, to build our schools. In our area, which is so fast-growing, schools are a very serious problem. I mean, that is numero uno.

Bagdikian: What do you think goes on in the mind of the average parent who is confronted with that, and says, "We'd better get some decent schools for my kids." I mean, what is the next step to turn that into something practical and financial that will do it?

Newhall: Well, you want me to be realistic? In the average parent in our area--this sounds so awful on tape--the only thing is, she wants to be sure that her child will go to a school that will not be contaminated by any racial--I'm saying this very mildly--any racial problems, any social caste problems, that it will be the best school, and they will have to pay the least for it. There is so much self-interest, it's frightening. I can become very kind of glum or pessimistic.

I do think people, human beings, are the only thing we've got, and I think they're the best thing we've got, and I've always loved them. I've always tried in the newspaper business to kid them along into having a little more fun and doing a little more for their neighbor, but it's kind of tough to do it and get any action now.

Riess: When you talk about following a story day by day, is it really essential that the paper be daily?

Newhall: No, I don't think so. The Signal--excuse me for popping in so fast --is faced with the problem of putting out six days worth of news in a community that probably needs at the most three days.

Riess: So it isn't necessary to see that story coming at you daily.

Newhall: I think that daily situations are perhaps too much for the average man and woman who don't have that time to devote to it. I am almost thinking right now, of going from two days a week to one day a week, and I think we might have more impact. Nobody agrees with me.

Riess: What do you mean, they don't have that time to give it? Are they also reading the L.A. Times at the same time, or what?

Newhall: No. In a family of readers they are probably both working, they're both trying to earn money to keep up the payments on the house. Now, this is a kind of yuppie southern California community about which I'm speaking. They have to get the kids down to karate school, the wife has to then go and work part-time, and spend the late afternoon in a physical fitness salon and so forth. There are too many demands on everybody's attention. They're too busy.

Riess: But you know, when you were talking about the Chronicle, people couldn't start the day without having read the Chronicle.

Newhall: I think it was a much simpler, more naive and contented society.

Riess: And that's the way you edited it; you made it so they couldn't start the day without it.

Newhall: But we had a community here that had some things in common, or an identity with San Francisco. In the south, our community doesn't even have a name--I can't give you a name by which you could immediately identify it. Remember, with the Chronicle, with San Francisco, you had Camelot, and you still do, even though Camelot is infected now with misfortunes and worse politicians than there used to be. San Francisco is still the municipal Disneyland of America.

Bagdikian: But also wasn't it big, so that something was happening all the time?

Newhall: People thought so. And things are happening, yes.

Bagdikian: Compared to a smaller community.

Newhall: There is nothing spiritually exciting or culturally exciting happening in our area right now, which is larger than Berkeley, incidentally. It's not just a little town.

Bagdikian: How much population?

Newhall: Oh, about 140,000, I guess now. Sure, we deliver to 44,000 homes.

Riess: Of course, we don't have any newspaper in Berkeley.

Newhall: No. You don't have a paper in Berkeley, and tragically the sense of community in old Berkeley has been shattered--or at least as I perceive it now. I mean, I feel that Berkeley's about three or four different communities now. I would never start a paper there, because I wouldn't know whether to write it for you, or for these fellows down next to the waterfront, or the people up in Homeless

Park, whatever they call it now, People's Park--I wouldn't know who my potential readers would be. I don't know if there is a Berkeley, except for the University.

Bagdikian: I think that's kind of true.

Newhall: I lived there, you know, for years, over next to Tilden Park, for some twenty, thirty years.

Bagdikian: There's always some group that's going to start a weekly.

Newhall: And the people who will read it won't advertise. That's your problem.

The Chronicle

Compared to the Washington Post

Riess: In Press Watch, by David Shaw (Macmillan, 1984), he notes the similarities between the Washington Post and the San Francisco Chronicle--

Newhall: That's the first time I heard that.

Riess: --and sets them off against the L.A.Times and the New York Times. He says the Post had more personality stories, more whimsy, more style than substance. I thought, gee, those seem like sort of the words that you [to Newhall] might have used at one point when you were thinking about the Chronicle. [to Bagdikian] I wondered--you were at the Post, what would you say?

Newhall: I would like to hear Ben's comment about if he thinks that applies to the Washington Post. You don't have to tell me that it applies to the Chronicle.

Bagdikian: The lack of substance, of course, I would not accept. [laughter] But I think it's perfectly true. One reason I liked it at the Post while I was there is that it was a writer's, reporter's paper. The New York Times is a bureaucratic machine, it's an institutional kind of thing--a little better than it used to be. But the Post was a bunch of fractious individuals who somehow got the paper out every day, and they were led by an editor who was almost as smart and lively as Scott.

Ben Bradlee loved things that were exciting and interesting, and it was a very good combination, because we also ran a lot of serious stories. But there was a point at which he would say, "my

eyes glaze over." Also, he let reporters have their head--too much head in a sense that some bad writing would get in.

But no, I would not argue with the fact that in that way the Chronicle for the last thirty years, and the Post, were both much more interesting. Post writing wasn't always good. I have to say, and I don't say it just to you, Scott, I think the Chronicle writing is as good as any in any newspaper, and I think the editing, the technical editing, is as good as any paper. I don't see bad stories in the Chronicle. I see them in every other paper.

Newhall: You mean bad stories mechanically, or professionally as such?

Bagdikian: The stories are not permitted to fall apart halfway through.

The Post is not as well edited, but it had that individuality, and when you were reading something it didn't look as though it were just another link in the sausage. I would not argue with that. I don't know what David Shaw meant about substance in the case of the Post; it has a lot of entertainment, but I don't have an argument with that. He may have been thinking as compared to the L.A. Times, which could stand a little bit more of that.

Riess: Well, maybe Washington is also Camelot, and so you have another Camelot paper.

Bagdikian: Washington's different. It's a company town, and there's the natural cohesion that is easy to react to.

Newhall: There is an establishment there in which the newspapers from all over are very much a part of it. It's an awful town, too, from another aspect.

Bagdikian: Terrible. I left it. I say it's a company town. There were connecting links to the middle-class residents. The non-middle-class simply disappeared. Middle-class people were either in the government, lobbying the government, or reporting on the government, and everybody knew the major figures in the news, and so you had a focal point for a paper. It made it very easy, I think.

Riess: And who owned it?

Bagdikian: The Grahams. And there again, I think the Post became what it is today because of Phil Graham. He was a brilliant, driving person who had an idea.

Newhall: Who was very vigorous and relatively young at the time. With reference to the Chronicle, I will sit still for anything anybody says about it in those terms, or substance even. I don't care.

"Taking Things Straight On"

Newhall: One thing I think was not perceived in the years in which I had anything to do with the real important basic policy of the paper, the direction of the Chronicle--certainly we fooled around with a lot of stuff, as I said earlier, and I like people, I like to kid around a little bit--the most important drive I had at the Chronicle and the most important contribution this strange paper made, I think, was its adherence basically to an anti-establishment policy that was opposed to the forces of hypocrisy, of antagonism, conflict, the centralization of oligarchic or tyrannical powers that were a threat.

I start with the McCarthy era, the loyalty oath. Eisenhower was okay, sort of. Vietnam was the worst thing that ever happened in my lifetime. Then Watergate. And now this Iran-Contra thing. The Chronicle, underneath all the games we played, you will find, if you go back to the files, was probably the first paper in the country that took on, straight on, some of these things.

We were opposed to Vietnam, and I had arguments with the deYoung family about it. And the Joe McCarthy was a tough era. I was kicked off of KRON--I used to make a little weekly television commentary--because I called McCarthy a paranoid on live TV. That was in the very beginning of the McCarthy act. This was before most people knew who the man was. This country has been through some dreadful, dreadful, dreadful eras.

The Reagan era was so much more sophisticated, and as Ben has said, it was choreographed so beautifully, that people don't know yet what has happened to us. The invasion of Grenada was the most laughable, but also one of the most dangerous things that ever happened to me, but I don't want to get into all this now.

My spiritual, if there is such a thing, principle, what I was trying to do with the free press of America, was to keep it free. If there is anything that is important today in the United States of America, it is the American press. And I don't know if they're going to be able to accept their responsibility and the challenge, and see us through what I think may be a very frightening, desperate, frustrating four or eight years. I don't know how we're going to make out, this country.

Bagdikian: How do you think the main body of, say, daily papers will do it, when confronted with that?

Newhall: It's a tough question. It depends on who has some control over their editorial policy, and I don't mean just editorials as such.

By the way, the Signal we just basically built on editorials.

We had to fake along with the news as best we could, because we didn't have the staff, but the editorials I used to write were outrageous, ridiculous, exaggerated hyperbole. We fought along on the most amazing things down there. They were, oh, so rambunctious.

But to answer you, it depends on the people you're turning out of school. I can be very cynical about things, or at least skeptical. And you know, Woodward and his partner Bernstein, they started a whole new wave of journalism. The Post let it go and let it happen. How much they guided it I don't know; you know much more than I do.

Bagdikian: I don't know.

Newhall: So now, I imagine half the kids that come into your school, or young people who come into your school, they all want to be investigative journalists, they want fame, instant fame. During the Senate committee hearings that rejected John Tower as Secretary of Defense I hated to see Bob Woodward's by-line on this stupid little Tower story about how Tower pinched some young lady in the ass, you know that? I mean, that was not a high-class piece. I thought it was sad. Because it doesn't do the cause any good.

Bagdikian: And it didn't do the paper any good, either.

Newhall: I'm sure. Everybody jumped on it. I didn't. I just didn't bother.

The Pulitzer Prizes

Newhall: Do you remember the episode when that young lady reporter on the Post--it was a story or series of stories by the young black girl who got a Pulitzer Prize for her series about some kids on cocaine in New York City, or something like that? Well, that particular Pulitzer Prize story certainly blew up in our faces, and it didn't do any of us in the newspaper business any good. And I know the Post had a tough time living with it. However, I'm taking the trouble to mention it here because that was an interesting example, in my experience, of what has been going on today in the Pulitzer world in newspapers across the country. At least I wouldn't be surprised if it's still going on.

Incidentally, I want to mention, for the record, that I have the greatest respect and admiration, professionally, for the Washington Post. I shall always be impressed with the fact that they were able to break loose from the Washington establishment and set an example of great newspapering. [Watergate]

You know, I used to be a Pulitzer Prize juror myself for quite

a number of years. We would all go back to New York; each of us would stay at the fancy hotel of his choice and live high on the hog on our own expense accounts. And for a couple of days we would wade through a morass of newspaper scrapbooks and clippings.

Riess: Who hands in the names of candidates for the Pulitzer Prize? How does this work?

Newhall: Well, basically any American can nominate any other American for a Pulitzer Prize in journalism. As to the selection process, there are a lot of guys from the papers around the country, and they go back to Columbia University in New York. At Columbia the Pulitzer staff breaks the jurors up into different judging categories. One of the categories, for example, is for the best news stories under deadline; another for the best editorial writer, and for the best editorial cartoonist, the best series, and so on. There were, I think, about three of us jurors for each category. After working through all the nominations, the jurors would send their recommendations to the Pulitzer committee, which is more or less a permanent committee tied up with Columbia. And this committee would announce the awards.

Well, in the year of which I am speaking, none of us on this jury was impressed with the editorial-writing entries--or with the editorials themselves. Incidentally, the other two fellows on this editorial-writing jury were Lee Hills and Felix McKnight. Lee Hills was a very smooth operator and a very highly-regarded newspaper man. He had the top job with the Knight newspapers at the time. Felix was a very good friend of mine. He was independently wealthy, I believe, and, as I recall, was editor or executive editor of the Dallas Times-Herald.

So we decided that we could not recommend a Pulitzer Prize for any of the material that we had waded through. We wrote a very stuffy formal report to the Pulitzer committee saying something like, "We feel none of the nominations in the editorial-writing category reached a quality high enough to satisfy the Pulitzer tradition." However, we added, "In the event that the Committee sees fit, however, to award a prize for editorial writing, we submit the following five names for your consideration." And we sent them a list of the five best that we could agree on.

Later in the year I picked up the Chronicle, or somebody sent me the AP or UPI story on the Pulitzer Prizes, and to my horror it seemed that the Pulitzer committee had not only announced an award for editorial writing, but they had given the prize to someone entirely different from the five candidates whom we had recommended. Obviously, I didn't like that. You pay your own passage back to New York City, and you do this service not only for the glory of it but also pro bono publico. I was furious. So, I picked up the phone and called the Dean at Columbia then, I forget who it was--

Bagdikian: Ed Barrett, maybe.

Newhall: I think it was. Ed's a nice guy, by the way, I really liked him, so I'm not sure it was Ed. But anyway I said, "What the hell is this all about? Why have you given the prize to some ringer?" And he answered, "Well, everybody figures that it was So-and-So's turn for a prize." And I got so goddamn mad I wrote them a letter and resigned. I quit, and I will never go back again and do that job, because I figure why waste time trying to pick a winner if certain members of the establishment are simply going to take turns at the prizes. I turned in my badge on that one.

Bagdikian: I wish more had, because until recently it was always "somebody's turn," in the Pulitzers.

Newhall: That's right. You always see some particular papers there. And there are a lot of hard-working editors in this country who have turned out Pulitzer material, and they get no recognition.

Bagdikian: The Post and the Times get a lot, and one year when I was at the Post I was pushing for one of our stories to be nominated with Bradlee. He said, "No, let's not do that on this category. Next year will be our category." [laughs]

Newhall: I think it's sad, because that's not my style, it really isn't. I promise you the Chronicle, as long as I was there, and probably for many years to come, will never get a Pulitzer Prize, to a certain extent on account of my attitude, because we were a maverick paper. There was nothing that outraged some of the establishment more than success.

Bagdikian: And something else is also unfair, and I've contributed to that unfairness. The Chronicle now is contrary to the stereotype that people have. But of course, those things die hard.

Newhall: Yes. You know, Chronicle-bashing is fun.

Sacramento and City Hall Coverage

Bagdikian: What you've said about the Chronicle's basic stand on civil liberties issues, also the freedom of individual style of living, I think really has been admirable, and I have not made enough of a point of that. But I do have a question. Along with that, and along with the fact that it was an entertaining page to read--and that's a wonderful element to have in a paper--how much would have changed in the content or the dynamics of how it was put together if every day you ran a couple of columns covering city hall or covering

the bread-and-butter kind of news, which really didn't have much of a place in the daily Chronicle back then?

Newhall: The greatest weakness we had in the Chronicle the years I was there was the fact that I could not find--now I shouldn't say "I," but from where I sat--couldn't find somebody who I thought was capable of covering Sacramento or San Francisco politically, to my satisfaction. I can only apologize, the fault was mine, it wasn't anybody else's. I kept telling Abe Mellinkoff, "For God's sake, who have we got?" We tried Jerry Burns, we tried two or three people.

It was terribly important. So the whole paper sort of covered City Hall simply as a total package. We covered City Hall but in an up and down way, perhaps. Sacramento is the most uncovered beat we had, and I think Sacramento is probably the most unimportant--or unattended--goddamn beat in the world. [laughter] I still do. And it wasn't because of that, though. I just never got around to taking a swipe at the soft underbelly of Sacramento.

Bagdikian: I think Sacramento's undercovered by everybody.

Newhall: Yes. Listen, that place, if it's not undercovered, why have you got the worst Mafia or gang of crooks in the world still doing business up there. That's what's happening. It is so bad, where do you start?

Bagdikian: At the beginning.

Riess: Well, actually, you considered buying a Sacramento paper. Would that have been one of your ways of getting started?

Newhall: Well, we were talking about buying the Union. And I don't know how it would have worked out.

Bagdikian: Would Skaif have sold it?

Newhall: It was then owned by about five or six guys who had bought it from somebody or had taken it over, it was in terrible shape. I can't even remember with whom we were dealing, but it was one of about--- we came very close to buying it, very. Charlie and I drove up there a couple of times and talked with them. I probably could get it back in my head--I've forgotten about it.

Bagdikian: How long ago would that have been?

Newhall: Dolly will be able to tell you. It must have been after we were in a little better shape, so I'd say in the early sixties.

Bagdikian: Was John McGoff an owner at that time?

Newhall: I don't know. I sound stupid. I can't remember. It was losing

money. The Sacramento Bee was--

Bagdikian: You could have beat the Bee.

Newhall: If I had felt we could have, I probably would have pushed it pretty hard. But I had enough problems right here in San Francisco. I was busy. I've always been half off my rocker; I didn't want to go totally off.

You're absolutely correct, though, when you say that the Chronicle did not properly mine those particular cultural bonanzas, San Francisco City Hall and Sacramento. And Sacramento still is not covered.

The Hearst Papers

Bagdikian: There's another question I've had, Scott. When I thought about the Chronicle and looked at it, and when I would come here during the fifties and sixties and look at it, I wonder how much that emphasis you gave the Chronicle--good writing and fun--was a reaction to the fact that the Examiner was such a deadly dull reactionary paper.

Newhall: Well, if you want the answer, I've spoken to it I think in these tapes. Actually in a sense we stood by and let the Examiner die of old age. I mean, the Chronicle didn't do it all. Our greatest assistant was the Examiner. They were coming out for decency in a city that was basically indecent. We were purposely being provocatively indecent. We just went along and let them expire.

I guess I should explain a little bit, for whatever interest you may have. When I took over my active part in this Chronicle and Paul Smith--a great man, and a very, very good personal friend of mine--left, it was the most difficult time in my life. The Chronicle was losing a million-something a year, and that was a major amount of money at that time. And the deYoung family had no money either. At least they simply could not continue losing a million or two forever, although they did have a TV station. We had the problem of being a more or less moribund paper. The Hearst papers--. The rest of them were dying, committing suicide, and I felt my mission in life was to save the Chronicle.

You have to tie your wagon to some star. The Chronicle became self-sufficient about 1962 or 1963. All these games we were playing--we made it fun, as you say. We got people to read the Chronicle and actually pay for it. And the advertisers--. I've been through all this, as Suzanne knows. After 1963, we were more or less self-sufficient. The Examiner was in desperate trouble, and in the end we negotiated this joint agreement.

Bagdikian: Why did they sign away the morning, why did they sign that agreement?

Newhall: Oh, committing suicide. Randy Hearst, whom I like and admire for being a nice man, sat there and said, "You know, if we go into the afternoon, we'll probably end up with about 275,000, and you guys will have 350,000, 375,000, that's not a bad deal. You give us the Sunday paper." I told Charlie, I said, "Look, if he wants to commit suicide, you'd better go ahead with it." Because that was the only thing that mattered, who was going to have the morning.

Bagdikian: Was it bad judgment, or that the Hearsts were bored with newspapers anyway?

Newhall: I can't answer for them. I think they were crazy. But I think they would have kept their doors open for a long time. Look what they've done in Los Angeles. You talk about a moribund property. I think they're going to close up in Los Angeles. At least they are talking about it more or less openly. I don't know all the answers to it. I do know at the time I felt a joint agreement was a wise thing to do, it would give the Chronicle, which I had been so much involved in, a total domination as far as I could think, because it was the morning paper.

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Bagdikian: I get the impression that the Hearsts had let the Examiner run down, not just editorially, but in their plant, their presses. They didn't want to spend money.

Newhall: It was an old and rotten plant.

Bagdikian: Isn't that what's happening to Hearst papers everywhere?

Newhall: Are any of them successful now?

Bagdikian: Not many of them. Albany succeeds, I suppose, because they've got a monopoly. They've gone into smaller papers now. I used to talk to some of them in Boston, guys who were living in the 1890s, waiting for a telegram from the chief to tell them what to put in the paper.

Newhall: That's true. You see, when the old gentleman died, he left behind him a whole network of old boys, and they were still in charge. Some of them got old and died, and of course their papers died along with them, because there was no one in that organization who had been groomed or brought up--there was no leadership. Randy Hearst --. I don't know if you know any of the Hearst boys. I've always liked Randy, though his lack of self-esteem or self-confidence is tragic.

Bagdikian: What do you think is going to happen to Will [William Randolph Hearst, III]?

Newhall: I don't know. I do not include him in what I was saying. I don't know him. I met him once, and I don't know. I think he's in a spot; he's got the Chronicle all over him like a tent.

Bagdikian: I think it depends how long he pays attention to it. In a way, he's got a wonderful deal. He gets to put out a big paper on small paper circulation. But I wonder if he'll get bored after a while, because he's interested in computers and things like that.

Newswriting, and Computers

Newhall: So are my sons.

These computers I'm not sure yet what their impact has been on writing or newspaper coverage. I have purposely assumed the posture, you know, of old-fashioned horror. [laughter] But I think computers may have an impact on the human being that may not have been expected.

Bagdikian: Some of the bad things in writing, for example.

Newhall: I do have a great respect for the art of writing, I really do. On the Chronicle we did our best. We had to fake along with it. Syle was important; sometimes style was the only thing we had. But some of the kids really sort of caught on, and they got interested in it. I thoughtthey were swell. They had a very free hand, and we had a hell of a good bunch of editors.

Bagdikian: Well, they got well edited, and they do today, I think.

Newhall: I just have been thinking about the people who were really responsible for the paper, and that was Bill German and Gordon Pates--I don't know if you knew Gordon or not--and Abe Mellinkoff, and Stanley Arnold the Sunday editor, and Templeton Peck, our chief editorial writer, and our promotion manager, Larry Wade, and Phelps Dewey. They were the top people when I was there. I thought they were marvelous.

Bagdikian: I use a computer to write now, and I'm addicted to it.

Newhall: They say once you try it you can't let it go.

Bagdikian: But one of the things I've wondered about. Unless I'm really on to something, I tend to write sloppy and then clean it up. And in the computer, the realization that you can change things instantly as

you go along is very different than when you're going at a typewriter, and you have to think ahead because it's a pain in the ass to retype the whole thing.

I think that you have a greater sense of coherence in how you're thinking when you use a typewriter, and a sense that, "If I don't get it right now, it's really going to be a lot of work to retype." And then if you do retype, you're looking at it as it was and I've got a sieve-like mind and I like to see where changes are going to be. But if you're constantly in this evolutionary change, with a computer rolling it out in a liquid way, I think there's a tendency to lose the sense of form.

Newhall: Well, you get into the wire copy syndrome, don't you.

Bagdikian: Yes. Go on and on and cut it from the bottom. And how do you think it's going to affect newspapers, other than in writing?

Newhall: I don't know, and I'm not a proper judge, and I'll tell you why. I guess my situation is probably kind of unique. I can use a typewriter the way you use a computer. If I make a mistake, I just keep going, and I never go back. But I correct or edit it with a pen and then I give it to a typist. I use it more or less the way you would use a computer, except I don't actually physically rewrite it on the screen.

Bagdikian: It used to be in a newspaper you'd do that when you were working fast. You did it, and you x-ed out, and then you pencilled it over and turned it in and that was it.

Newhall: Look, I couldn't hold a job, I swear to you, I mean that, I couldn't hold a job in a modern newspaper, because I have to have somebody there who can type it and read my writing. I don't know how they do it. And then, I will correct that. I have them print it out. I'll correct that at least two or three times. And it's very unfair. It's not professional newspapering or writing in the old-fashioned sense anymore, as far as I'm concerned.

Bagdikian: One of the things that has happened, I think, with computers and data bases, is that you see a story now, and it's filled with--and frequently at an advantage--with references to things that happened in the past, because they can pull it out of the data bank. But you sometimes see that it's in there only because they pulled it out of the data bank and they want to use it. Like, "The same thing happened in 1906." Of course, we all love libraries and going back.

Newhall: I don't even know what a data bank is. I mean, I wouldn't know how to use it.

Bagdikian: It's very complicated, as a matter of fact. That's why sometimes

somebody has to intervene.

Newhall: It's a shorthand library system, I take it, of some sort.

Riess: This seems like the criticism that the language in newspapers--well, probably in general--has deteriorated in the last twenty years. David Shaw blames academic permissiveness.

Newhall: Oh, you mean the language itself deteriorating?

Riess: No, newspaper writing.

Bagdikian: Did he say newspaper writing has deteriorated in twenty years?

Riess: Yes.

Bagdikian: I disagree.

Riess: Some newspapers are hiring English professors and coaches.

Newhall: We've got a coach, we call her the editor. [laughter] And she is Ruth.

Bagdikian: Don't you think that the public demands better writing now than they did forty years ago?

Newhall: I'm not sure I agree. I think the public can't understand something that was written in 1890. You're talking about twenty or thirty years, what's that? I'm thinking about a hundred years ago.

Bagdikian: I had my first newspaper job in 1941. In the forties most newspaper writing by far was stereotyped, wire copy kind of writing, inverted pyramid. A lot of people learned how to do it, and every fire story sounded like every other fire story. You didn't make personal observations, and you didn't use adjectives that weren't standard news service adjectives.

Newhall: Yes. This was the era of the teletype machine, and the wire service that had made such an impact, and everybody, as you say, was using that when I first went to work. There were teletype machines, all right, but still the old reporters had the most marvelous command of syntax and vocabulary, and would write feature stories that I thought were wonderful. And I don't think the kids now--they can do it sometimes, they tend to overwrite a little bit when they do it--like me.

Bagdikian: I think I've seen more good writing in more papers now than I saw thirty years ago.

Newhall: I wouldn't quarrel with that. I read the Los Angeles Times quite a bit, and I also get the New York Times, and there's some marvelous

stuff in both of those papers. (I don't see the Washington Post at all.) There's some marvelous stuff. There are still some awfully good writers. Of course, a lot of them are going free-lancing, or going to magazines. There's some very good writing in America today.

Bagdikian: What I think has happened is that the division between the kind of writing that's done in a magazine and the kind that's done in newspapers is diminishing, so that you see features, whole articles written in the style that used to be true only in magazines. I think that's a plus. So I would disagree with Shaw.

One place where it's very clear what computers have done is in copyediting. You can't copyedit as fast on a computer as you can on paper with pencil. A lot of papers, because computers have saved time and money at the reporting end, have assumed it would be true at the desk, but discovered it takes much longer. Also the relationship between the copyeditor and the reporter has changed, because the reporter's way over there, and talking on a kind of loudspeaker as reporter and editor watch their separate screens. You see just this much of the story at a time, and the editor is changing things, and the reporter may or may not--

Newhall: It's fascinating.

Bagdikian: And so you don't get the kind of learning process, I think, and the interchange when the editor says to the reporter, "Look, there's a picture here. Fix that." It's all done by machine at a remote distance. I think that changes things.

Newhall: Yes. In our little paper, and in the Signal, the editor would call the reporter over still, even with the terminals, talk to him, or yell across the room. You don't get that much anymore. There was a tremendous interchange in the papers during the thirties and forties and fifties, anyway--it began to die out in the fifties, I think, or sixties--between the editors and the reporters.

I think if I had to cover a community and I had a metropolitan paper I'd be inclined to go back to reporters and rewrite men--you know, we used to have a bank of rewrite men. They'd be older guys who knew how to write. A reporter would go out and get the stuff and phone it all in, sometimes wouldn't come in all day. I won't say it was great literature, but there was a lot of colorful writing sometimes. These guys were old-timers.

Bagdikian: There was a police reporter at the Post, Al Lewis, who'd been a police reporter for forty-three years. And I don't think he's ever written a story.

Newhall: One guy was down at the old Hall of Justice in San Francisco--Harry Peters. I don't know if he went to the new Hall or not. I don't

think he ever came into the office, not even for his paycheck, maybe. I guess he'd come in once a week to pick up his paycheck. I don't know if some of these old beat reporters could write a sentence.

Newhall's List of Good Writers

Riess: [to Bagdikian] When we talked on the phone, one of your questions for Scott, and you didn't know you were going to get to see him face to face, was about his heroes in newspaper writing. I don't think I've ever asked you [to Newhall] such a question. I don't have a picture of you with a pantheon of heroes, but did you when you started out?

Newhall: Well, I started out my first year in the business reading Vincent Sheean's book, and Walter Duranty and all the old idols of the thirties, and the Russian, Communist Revolution, the Spanish Civil War. There was a lot of personal writing. Hearst had H.R. Knickerbocker. The Seldes brothers [George & Gilbert] wrote about the press. John Gunther and his "inside" books had a tremendous impact on me. He was slick and he developed a style that I think is still being felt, particularly in foreign correspondence.

But in terms of just great writing and newspapering, I think the greatest American journalist who's ever lived is Henry [H.L.] Mencken. There would be a lot of debate, maybe, about it. I've never known a man who could write a better story in my life.

Riess: Did you ever meet him?

Newhall: No, I never met him. And he lived to about the 1970s, didn't he? [1880-1956] He got quite old. But man, he was a good writer.

Lucius Beebe was not a great journalist, maybe, but he was an awfully good writer. I really admire writers. I'm trying to think who really were good writers that I knew. Evelyn Waugh was a novelist, George Bernard Shaw was a playwright. That's about the pantheon. Edward Gibbon's writing style is still in a class by itself.

Riess: You've mentioned The New Yorker. Is it because of its editing?

Newhall: The New Yorker had more influence, I think, on the Chronicle in the thirties and forties, maybe fifties, than any other publication. We read it religiously. Everybody.

Bagdikian: Is that general reading in the newsroom?

Newhall: It was then. Well, I spent most of my earlier years on the Sunday magazine, This World it was called then, and it was a little different than it is now. And Time magazine had a tremendous impact on my approach toward the English language, and Time's imitators and so on. Hell, This World was an imitation of Time, kind of. But The New Yorker, and E.B. White, and "Talk of the Town," and the profiles they did--. And they're still coming out. Ruth reads them still every week. I just don't have the time to.

Bagdikian: That's interesting, because The New Yorker was very careful, I always thought, with being clear in its writing, but it also permitted the development of subtlety. As a kid, I think my first idea that humor wasn't limited to Captain Billy's Whizbang was looking at these New Yorker cartoons and saying, "Now, why is that funny?" and then having to figure it out. And I'm interested that in the Chronicle in those days, a lot of the staff read The New Yorker regularly. I don't think that was true in many papers.

Newhall: Maybe not, but you know Wolcott Gibbs, George Jean Nathan and Alexander Woollcott--these were great writers and critics.

Bagd: That tells me a lot, not just in style. That's very interesting.

Newhall: Ruth still reads The New Yorker. She did a lot of reporting and writing, and everybody--well, we all tried to imitate the sophistication of The New Yorker. What the hell. I don't know, I just liked it.

Bagdikian: But also, The New Yorker broke the mould--not broke the mould, but it was a strong example that contradicted the wire service stuff. It was those "Notes and Comments." You see something that happened on the street, and it was a very interesting account. And so did Time magazine. Time magazine for a lot of people was attractive because they'd been reading newspapers in which everything was told backwards. The last thing that happened is first. Whereas in Time magazine you saw the week's events told in a narrative. In The New Yorker it was perfectly all right not to begin with the guy being run over by a truck, then where he lived, then what time he left the house that morning. You began with his leaving the house.

Newhall: Ruth won't allow anybody to write in any style but the narrative style. The guy gets run over in the last paragraph, more or less. [laughter] Then they settle the estate. It's not quite that bad, but her stories--someone said, "Well, they all start with 'It was a dark and stormy night...'" [laughter] And so on.

Riess: The New Yorker also took on McCarthyism and Vietnam.

Newhall: You bet they did, absolutely. They were clean.

Bagdikian: Oh, and the Vietnam War, too. They paid for that.

Newhall: Did they pay?

Bagd: They paid in a very odd way. I went to New York and I talked to Bill Shawn about that. They began saying very clearly what was happening in Vietnam, and young Jonathan Schell went over there--he'd been on the Harvard Crimson, and he looked like a good respectable Harvard yuppie, and the generals all gave him plane rides and were showing him what a wonderful war it was. He began writing it straight, and he wrote to Shawn, who was an old family friend, and Shawn said, "This is a story." It was a story about various kinds of bombing and spraying raids.

The New Yorker began saying very plainly why the war was bad. And the kids on the campuses began reading The New Yorker for the first time. It ruined their demographics. Suddenly it shifted the median age. I have all the figures some place. It dropped it ten years. It dropped the income level way down, compared to The New Yorker's usual one. The New Yorker had been the leader, or first or second, in ad pages every year, and there was a period of about six years when they weren't losing money, but they had drastic losses. The circulation stayed about the same, but it was the younger, less rich people reading it.

Newhall: Less affluent, the readers?

Bagdikian: Yes. They were more college kids. The kids were going to be affluent, but not for a few years. I asked Shawn, "Did anybody ever come to you and say, 'This is causing some financial problems'?" He turned red, which he does easily anyway. He said, "Why, that would be unthinkable." And I believe it.

Newhall: The New Yorker--now that it comes up--was my first experience with contemporary reporting of what people said, and not what they were trying to tell you. And one of their tricks was quotes. If you listen to a politician now, of course, they have polished and cleaned themselves up for TV; they come out and tell you something, they tell you the world's going to hell, but they're wrapping it up in a package where supposedly things are just swell. You can just tear anything to pieces, if you really report what's going on. I mean, believe me, Vietnam is an example.

Ruth and I worked together on the founding of the United Nations conference here in San Francisco, and we enjoyed a considerable success. We beat the ass off the New York Times in one story, which was the Charter itself. I had a young lady, a member of the deYoung family, Nan Tucker, who was working on the conference. She was the best leg man I ever knew; she couldn't write too fluently, but she was a marvelous girl, or woman, and she knew everybody.

We began to piece the whole thing together, the U.N. Charter, paragraph by paragraph, the original founding charter. And so we had the whole thing down, word for word, paragraph by paragraph, about a day before Alger Hiss and his staff--Alger Hiss was then, I don't know, secretary of the conference--had the thing written down for the delegates and the press. So we published it.

The New York Times staff--Scotty Reston was among them--was out here working in the Chronicle offices, their staff, and they asked if they could have permission to release the text in the New York Times. I said, "Sure, be my guest, just be sure to give us a credit line." They wouldn't do it. So we beat them a day. That's the Times for you.

Bagdikian: So imperious.

Newhall: That's right! I just laughed. "All you've got to do is put a credit line, tell them where you got it." [laughter]

Bagdikian: It isn't news unless the New York Times says it is.

Political Fallibility--An End of Innocence

Bagdikian: That must have been very exciting, that whole time.

Newhall: Yes, it was. It was a fascinating thing. That's where I learned really how fallible political leadership is, what people are really like. I learned there that kings and queens and dictators and presidents and generalissimos are people no matter where they are.

Bagdikian: In what way, what do you mean?

Newhall: Our chosen dignitaries and leaders are basically very fallible human beings, and they're motivated with very personal and normal reasons.

Bagdikian: That you learned at that conference here? What do you mean, in personal behavior?

Newhall: No, no. Oh, no. Well, when I was nine years old I still thought that American Presidents were God. In 1923 I had to go with my father out to Arlington Cemetery to listen to President Warren Harding make a Memorial Day speech. And as I sat there in the sunshine with the flags flying and this stately white-maned figure booming away, I thought, "My god, here's God." Well, after a few years I finally suspected that Warren G. Harding probably was not God, after all. And by the time I was thirty-one years old, covering the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in 1945, I figured there was no use waiting any longer for God to show up.

Riess: But not until 1945 did you lose your innocence? [laughter]

Bagdikian: When I was five years old I was growing up on Calvin Coolidge, although I didn't realize until much later that he was probably the dumbest president we've had.

Newhall: [laughing] And the sleepiest. That's what Mencken said.

Riess: But in the meantime, you did have that notion that there were very fine leaders, a notion my children growing up haven't ever had.

Bagdikian: It was the notion of a standard stereotype. You saw these formal pictures that were taken by Bachrach or people like that, and that's the only thing you saw of these people. You saw their formal statements in the papers. You didn't see them at conventions that were televised.

Newhall: And now, thanks to television and modern technology, newspaper technology, I think every kid is brought up to think of a political leader as suffering from satyriasis and is a drunk. So we've got a problem there.

Bagdikian: But also, one of the things I think television has done, not to beat up on television forever, is that I think it produces a deep, deep cynicism. Kids grow up knowing that this is all baloney that they're seeing, the commercials and such stuff. But it's a very insidious kind of cynicism, because I think television in a sense gets across the message, "Listen, I know this is ridiculous, and you know it's ridiculous, and we're in this together."

Newhall: Not the commercials.

Bagdikian: Well, the commercials and the programs. The commercials in a way ridicule things that kids ridicule.

Newhall: Well, yes.

Bagdikian: The commercials for kids generally are pillorying the adults and showing that--but there's a kind of cynicism that comes out because these kids have been inundated with all of that. They have seen the president almost picking his nose. One of the things Reagan did so well was to make sure he was seen only in heroic or friendly scenes.

Newhall: You had to be sharp to catch him napping, when he was at a banquet. [laughter] You know, there's a whole generation of Reagan kids, and adults, who think all those photo pictures of him and stills were made from ten feet away, when they're actually all made from fifty yards away with television photo lenses. The public, watching TV, never sees all the security, they have no idea what the true physical presence of their president is like, in terms of security.

Bagdikian: There's a book by a guy named Mark Hertzgard, called On Bended Knee, about how the Washington press covered Reagan. It describes how for practically every public appearance the staff would draw the footprints for the president and whoever else, because the camera angles were always worked out with elaborate care. That's what counted.

Newhall: When the pope visited Mexico, five, six, seven years ago, whenever it was, he was going out to a little town to either bless the people or be seen by the faithful, or whatever. The townspeople--I don't know how well you know rural Mexico--were all standing around. The trucks arrive, complete with fences, straw, corn husks, or whatever the pigs eat, and a truckload of pigs, and put up a pigpen so that somehow there will be a rural setting for the pope to do his business there. When the pope departed after the mass or after the blessing, the stage set crew picked up all the pigs and all the corn husks, and off they went.

Bagdikian: When Adlai Stevenson was running, I think it was the second time, they had planned, his staff, and the media, the television and movies, to have him visit a house he'd grown up in a district that would have been useful for him. There was a script--it wasn't a word to word script--but he will enter through this door, he will look at it, and this will bring back memories of the time he was young. He had been shown this, and all the reporters were in on it, and he spoiled it all. He walked in, looked around, and said, "You changed the wallpaper." [laughter]

Newhall: That's very funny. You know, he was a funny guy. We got to know him. He was a pretty good friend of Nan Tucker's whom we were talking about. They were very close. He was a bright guy. He was too bright to be a president.

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Riess: Is there anything that the media could do to save this administration?

Newhall: Maybe not become a part of it. I mean, the whole establishment there, the press is pretty close to--well, they depend on each other, don't they, the way the drug smugglers depend on the growers, and the cops depend on the robbers.

Bagdikian: I have a good friend in Washington, and a former colleague, really a good newspaperperson for whom I have a lot of respect. When William Clark was in the Reagan White House, I kept seeing these puff pieces in Newsweek about Clark's basic instinct for the heart of the matter. How, without any background, he's learned from his past political experience how to see the essence of whatever he handles, and has the great wisdom. All of it was obviously not true.

I asked my friend, "How is that happening?" He said, "Well, they're very good at it. When Clark gets back to his desk after an announcement by the government in his area, there are forty telephone messages on his desk from reporters. Clark picks the reporter who will be the most useful, and calls him over." This guy said, "I get called every now and then." He would go up to see Clark, and he would ask Clark, "What's the president's real feeling about the next step?" Clark said, "Wait a minute." He picks up the phone, dials. "Ron? This is Bill. I've got so-and-so here in my office. What do you think is going to happen next?" And then he puts it down, and he gives him a little nugget.

Well, at four o'clock in the afternoon, when your deadline is at six-thirty, that's pure gold in the conventional standards of reporting in Washington, where everybody is looking for something different. There are 6500 credited domestic correspondents in Washington now, and they're all lusting to get a separate lead. And these guys in the White House learned how to play it. The political operators have become much more adept at doing that than the journalists have in dealing with it. It doesn't take a gift from heaven to do otherwise. You just don't get too close.

Also, reporters ought to get out of Washington regularly.

Getting out of Washington: America Today

Newhall: I think you can see Washington more clearly from Berkeley, or even southern California, than you can from the Potomac. To me, it's more transparent. When the people I knew went back to do a stint in Washington, they always seemed to become hypnotized. You get there and you're caught up in the show itself, and you see the stageset and the actors and the stagehands and all the stuff and the makeup, you don't really see what's happening.

Riess: You mean, there shouldn't be all these Washington bureaus?

Newhall: There have to be, I mean sure, but it all becomes an "in" thing there. I can't explain it. I just think from a distance you can tell, by browsing through television, the wire services, the papers, there are many very gifted correspondents back there, believe me. They're all beating their own brains out, and if you're away from it, you can see both the trees and the forest in front of you, and you can make up your mind I think fairly clearly about what the reality is, sifting it out of all these different competing sources.

Bagdikian: In my experience in Washington you get absorbed with who wins and who's losing in every particular little power struggle, for turf,

for policy, and after a while that begins to be your impression of what's happening to the United States of America. That isn't what's happening to the United States of America.

Newhall: That's right. That's the game. This is all part of a much larger game that's being played--a much larger game.

Bagdikian: But also they confuse what is happening in the world with the public dialogue between the power brokers. The things said for political purposes often are provably untrue, but pass for reality in the rest of the country. It happens over and over again. I think that is why, to me, one of the great deficiencies is that reporters don't get out of Washington.

Newhall: They ought to bring all the bureau people home or send them to different parts of the country to see what America's like. Oh, my god, in my opinion, there are some basic changes taking place in our American national policy that are going to be very important. I don't know what's going to happen.

One thing, a number of administrations--now I'm just pontificating, and I apologize--one huge problem that is being pushed aside back there is what will our immigration and naturalization policy really be in the coming years. We haven't faced that for generations, I think. You know, one day they're digging the ditch between Mexico and California, and the next day they're arresting all the Mexicans coming off an Eastern Airlines plane and saying, "Look, you're a wetback; we're going to send you back to Costa Rica," or wherever the hell they come from.

This country's problem--and this has nothing to do with what we're talking about now, reporting, except you can sure see it if you watch--our problem with immigration is going to come home in a way that people have not thought about in terms of local elections and control. Florida--I won't go to Miami, literally, I don't think you can get me to Florida. I just don't want to go. And southern California I'm used to.

Bagdikian: What do you mean?

Newhall: The makeup, the ethnic makeup of this country, what's an American today? It would shock people if they really knew what some of the true percentages are, in terms of votes. In southern California, in the Los Angeles School district the Anglos are in a distinct minority.

Bagdikian: Is that true?

Newhall: Literally. Los Angeles public school district Anglo population is only 35 to 40 percent.

Bagdikian: What will you do?

Newhall: I don't know. But I don't think George Bush does, either.

I got a list of things that just startled me about population habits or makeup the other day. It did startle me to learn how many women are working, and how many Hispanics there are here, and the distribution of wealth today. The Valencia-Santa Clarita Valley is almost totally a product of white flight, totally. Some Hispanics, but very, very few Asians, and very, very few blacks.

Bagdikian: Well, economically, one of the things that scares me is that an enormous portion of the population, mostly middle-class young families, are living that close to spending all of their income, and it wouldn't take much of a drop before they go below the line.

Newhall: I think it's terribly dangerous. I don't know how so many people manage to buy the houses, and they line up to buy them, and I don't think they're paying for them. Well, look at the savings and loan institutions. I have no answers for it, because I don't know what the scope of the problem is, and I don't think the papers do, and I don't think the administration has a clue.

XIV THE NEWSMAN'S LIFE, AND CHANGES IN JOURNALISM

[Interview 10: July 12, 1989]

A Typical Day##

Riess: Would you describe a typical day at the high point of your career? You're going to have to decide when the "high point of your career" was!

Newhall: I'd always have a lunch date with somebody--I really can't describe it sensibly at this point because it's remote as to what took up all day, but believe me, it began at ten in the morning and quit at about seven or eight at night. It included all the meals and discussing editorials for an hour, say, and people were always in the waiting room, and people were always on the telephone. It's the way any two-bit corporate manager, one of these executives in the Brooks Brothers suit, works now, except we didn't have the electronic equipment that they have now. It was all by telephone or by personal conversations and letters--dictating letters all the time.

Sometimes Charlie would be waiting at ten o'clock in the morning, would join me in the office. Dolly would go and sit outside. Charlie and I would go out to lunch, probably at the Pacific Union Club. We'd come back, and he'd come inside, and we'd sit all afternoon. I'd forgotten that that was a great part of the typical day.

Ruth N.: Then Charlie would go home about seven, and Dolly would come in, and Scotty would race through his necessary business.

Newhall: All the correspondence.

Ruth N: And sometimes get home at ten o'clock for dinner.

Newhall: Well, I was working pretty hard then. I had a very special kind of position there. I had a superb staff of editors to take care of the

paper on a day to day basis. But I had to see that the paper was a success. I can't explain the difference. But I had to worry about how we promoted the paper, how we circulated it, what color the trucks were painted, the labels or trademarks we would design and use, what the billboards and rackcards would be like, what the advertising campaigns in Editor and Publisher or Advertising Age were, what motto we used, how we dressed the paper, what type we used. It was a little bit of everything.

[added later] Incidentally, back to your question about what a typical day was like, it happens that I finally found an old tape that we made when Ruth was interviewing me back in 1967. As you may recall, our house down here in Piru burned to the ground five or six years ago. I thought all of Ruth's interview tapes had gone up with the house, but there was a single tape interview that survived the fire. And this entire tape was in answer to her question, "Can you describe what happened yesterday in your office?" This was on February 25, 1967. So I am having this tape transcribed, and we can either insert it here or add the text as an appendix. [Following Chapter XV.]

Chronicle Editors, and Dolly Rhee

[additions dictated by Newhall]

Newhall: We've talked about Chronicle promotions and how we finally got the Chronicle organized for the great battle with the Hearst people. I think I should mention here that I personally had plenty of time to concentrate on packaging and promoting the paper while the day-to-day production was taken care of by the most gifted and best-organized group of newspaper editors I have ever known. These fellows were smart and tough and all armed with a great sense of humor. And they were able to handle our post-war newspaper free-for-all in the Bay Area.

From my point of view we were so well-organized and in tune with each other, I could be gone anywhere in the world and stay away as long as I wanted and the Chronicle would just keep on going--flowing along like the muddy Mississippi. I am not speaking here of our well-fed stable of literary dandies and con men, our columnists and feature writers. I am talking about the editors: Gordon Pates, managing editor; Abe Mellinkoff, our city editor; Bill German, the news editor; and Stanleigh Arnold, Sunday editor.

There were others: very important, our promotion managers, J.P. Cahn, a fellow from Stockton and Stanford, who started us off on the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt; Phelps Dewey, a handsome and deceptively mellow young man who came from his own paper somewhere

near Santa Fe in New Mexico (Espanola, I think); and later Larry Wade, who came from the Riverside paper down south. Later on Larry left the Chronicle to work in the vineyards of the Lord. He took a fund-hunting job with the religious entrepreneurs in Berkeley who are organized up on top of the hill just west of Euclid Avenue near North Gate over at Cal. Larry raised a lot of money for the greater glorification of the Heavenly Host, but then came back to earth and helped me out when we were trying to get the Signal off the ground down at Newhall.

Anyway, for years I enjoyed the immense privilege of having time for dreaming up promotions or investigations, or outrageous exposes. I really didn't have to worry much about whether or not the paper was coming out on schedule, which it always did. Most of all I enjoyed the great luxury of being able to attend daily editorial conferences and study at length the inevitable problems and questions of our planetary troubles, the problems of war and peace, of our rising or falling national economy, of California's huge water plan--sending northern California water south to Los Angeles--education in our schools, racial tensions, where to build Candlestick Park, what to do about topless and bottomless dancers, what to do about Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, Henry Kissinger and all the rest of those scoundrels who have "enriched the fabric of America the Beautiful."

And speaking of privilege and convenience and this luxury gift throughout all these years of building up the Chronicle, the luckiest luxury was handed to me by my Uncle Birdie. You may remember I have mentioned earlier on that in the old days at San Rafael one of our family intimates was a young Presbyterian minister named Remsen D. Bird, who after a stint at the San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo became president of Occidental College down in Eagle Rock in the shadow of Los Angeles. He had lived with us in San Rafael and was more or less my godfather.

Well, Dr. Bird always followed the post-college careers of his more challenging students, and for whatever reasons he may have had, a very personable young woman of obvious oriental ancestry landed on my mother's doorstep at the Berkeley Women's City Club on Durant Avenue in Berkeley in 1942. She was bearing a letter of introduction from Dr. Bird, who suggested that she might be a perfect candidate for something-or-other in the newspaper business in general, and on the Chronicle in particular. A day or two later a young woman, five foot tall, or short, dressed and polished as if she were headed for an opera opening, showed up at my desk in the dingy Chronicle offices, and said she would do any kind of work, no matter what.

She identified herself as a Miss Elizabeth Rhee, or as she preferred, Dolly Rhee. She said that she had graduated from Occidental and subsequently earned her master's degree in

comparative literature at USC; that she was the American-born daughter of Korean immigrants; that after World War I her father had cornered the rice market and established a fancy fruit-packing business in the California Central Valley; that the rice market had subsequently gone bust; and that thereupon the family had moved to greater Los Angeles and opened an oriental restaurant which was reasonably successful despite the fact that in this particular dining establishment "the customer was always wrong."

Dolly materialized at the Chronicle shortly after Pearl Harbor and she never left. She started in as a copy girl for This World and a typist, and later became my secretary when I became Sunday editor. She left the paper when I resigned in 1971 and still works as my secretary and takes remarkably good care of my often sloppy affairs.

In describing Dolly and the aura about her, she is a tiny person, well-groomed and generally immaculate, but with the commanding presence and vocabulary of a muleskinner, and the mellow disposition of a pit bull. You see, Dolly came to work in 1942, almost at the time the Japanese-Americans and the Japanese aliens on the West Coast were being sent away to dentention camps behind the mountains. And very few of the sidewalk Anglo-Americans could distinguish between a Korean American and a Japanese American. Dolly was often subjected to embarrassing or unfriendly advances on the streets of San Francisco.

Within the Gothic battlements of the Chronicle itself, Dolly, who had come to us from the more or less ivy-covered Victorian halls of academia, had to somehow adapt herself to the earthy inkstained world of the American newspaper. And so, after a year or so at the Chronicle, she developed her own defense against the lustful remarks of the copy desk and the lechery of the composing room. Dolly still sums up her experience in assimilation into the furnace room of American journalism by remarking, "When I arrived in town and came to work at the Chronicle, I was still a little oriental Plum Blossom. After the first six months in that goddamned bull pen I became Plum Tart. It was the only way I could handle those savages in the composing room."

Some people around the paper considered Dolly to be the Dragon Lady, a tyrant. Some regarded her as a kind of short-tempered angel. Whenever Count Marco thought he was running into trouble he would come marching in carrying Dolly a bouquet of violets. Lucius Beebe used to send her gold ornaments on her birthdays.

From 1942 until today, Dolly has handled our affairs. And during the twenty years I was the active editorial executive at the Chronicle she could keep my office going whether I was there or not. She handled the phones--there were four--she kept my personal accounts, she made engagements, acted as intermediary with the staff

and public, she poured coffee, wrote letters and handed out theater and opera tickets to the staff.

Dolly quit three times--once when I tore the phones off the wall. She threw the women's liberation squad off the premises when they came downtown to picket the Chronicle. She tried to serve the BART publicity committee hemlock instead of coffee. When her husband was recovering from a heart attack, she hit him over the head with a stew pan and threw him out of the house forever. She swore like a trooper, ate like a bird, and dressed like a fashion model--and she still does. But most of all, she kept my office going during some very busy times.

And, oh yes, Dolly's family was always successful. Her younger sister Mary was very active in southern California educational circles, and her young brother, Dr. Sammy Lee, became one of America's most renowned athletes. He won the high diving gold medal in two successive Olympic Games, and he continues to tour the world as an American presidential ambassador of good will.

[end dictated addition]

Stress and Drinking*

Riess: {Have you seen changes in drinking behavior among your colleagues?}

Newhall: In terms of alcohol consumption--of course, this is the history of modern man to a certain extent, and I had to quit drinking myself because I was pretty alcoholic when I was a youngster--there was a lot of hard drinking before the war, during the war, and right after the war. Then I think people tapered off into cocaine and marijuana and stuff. I don't see nearly the alcohol consumption these days, but it may be just my age.

Riess: We're talking in the newsroom, though.

Newhall: Even in the newsroom, I don't see any. Some of the guys may be puffing on a few of their own chemical substances--I don't know--and there's been such a hip-hip-hurrah about this silly cocaine and marijuana crisis that everything is all twisted. Alcohol is a very, very, very powerful and difficult drug, dangerous, and yet I just

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*Questions designated {} were suggested by Lynn Ludlow and Peter Mellini, newspaper historians.

don't think it's used around the city rooms as frequently as it used to be.

There used to be a lot of drinking in newsrooms. I've told the story about my first day on work. There was this police reporter passed out on my enlarger, when I was a photographer. Literally, I had to haul him off and throw him on the floor to get about my business.

Riess: Why was there all that drinking?

Newhall: I don't know. I think it was custom, and I think a lot of people who are subject to--I don't mean to get into a physiological discussion--who are subject to a so-called dependency or to habit-forming concoctions are probably pretty good reporters and writers. I don't know which comes first--the chicken and egg situation--the reporter or the alcoholic.

Riess: Well, is it a stressful job, and you need to drink because of the stress?

Newhall: Which comes first? The stress, or the job, or the drink, or what?

Riess: Do you think it's a stressful job.

Newhall: Oh, yes. Yes. Very, very. It's damn near killed me.

Riess: As editor, yes.

Newhall: Well, I think all newspaper people wouldn't be in the business if they weren't stressful-type people. You get somebody who's sitting alone there, you know, cranking along at about 98 or 102 IQ, and he's all full of tacos or cheeseburgers, or, you know, waffles or something, he's not going to be all that good a reporter. Forgive this--

Riess: [chuckling] I'm trying to picture that person.

Newhall: Of course, now it's computers, but you don't see a guy working, writing priceless, historic prose, who mostly just feeds his face during the day and sleeps and snores at night. Most of the fine reporters I have known were accustomed to spending half the night wrestling with their insoluble psychic problems.

Riess: In other words, you don't have couch potatoes in the newsroom.

Newhall: Not very many. These days you may be getting some more. But no. It was a job. It was a performance. It was a lifestyle. It's a little different now, because people come in with fancy resumes and pasted-up scrapbooks. Today I doubt that many city editors look up from their desks and say, "Hey! We've got a job open. Do you know

any good reporter who needs some work?" and some guy comes tottering in, a friend of somebody.

Riess: That's interesting that you say it was a performance. I mean, who's the audience?

Newhall: Who's the audience? Everybody around you in the streets, at the party, or in the restaurant at night. You're a newspaper man with a press pass, and you're all set to go. You're quite a person. And now, you have to be an investigative reporter and ask pertinent questions and dig up whole stories about how the elderly are doped up or something. I don't want to get going on some of my pet peeves. Come on!

Reporters in the thirties tried to live up to it. They glorified it. And it's the best work and job in the world, I still maintain. I wouldn't be in any other.

Riess: You really are emphasizing the show-biz nature of it.

Newhall: We were all on stage, if that's an answer. And I suppose, in a way, that newspaper people are still actors.

Kickback

Riess: (Was there much sleaze and kickback in the newspaper business?)

Newhall: How do you mean? I really don't understand. S-l-e-e or e-a-z-e, whatever it is? Sleaze. Yes. That's a fairly new word for me. I mean, in the last two or three years. I don't like it, but anyway I've never run across it much.

We're talking about taking money on the side or something, for giving favors in newspapering--is that it?

Riess: Sure. Money, or travel, or whatever.

Newhall: When I was at the Chronicle, we used to be quite rigid about it. I never had any problem with it. I really didn't. I said to our people: "Look, if you've got any problems, pay your own way." It didn't bother me, and I never had to climb on anyone for taking any favors on the side. I never encountered it, and I think my colleagues were basically all pretty straight. When they were traveling with the teams and stuff, the teams would sometimes pay for it. Sometimes we would, and there was always a little argument with some teams about who would pay for what. I never did like accepting a free ride, if there was any even slight whiff of "quid pro quo."

Perhaps I can give a specific example of my personal attitude toward newspaper people doing something unprofessional in our newspaper. It was the custom--and still is, I believe--in major leagues and, I think, some of the smaller baseball leagues, that the local sports editor, or one of the sports columnists, also kept the box score.

I always felt that a reporter should not do this. It wasn't that they were getting any money, but it was the fact they might make the so-called "hometown call." In other words, you've got a big, important game going on, and when your reporter is in the observer's box there, and he makes a call of a hit or error, whatever it is, I think it can tend to go for the hometown team. I asked our people to decline to participate in that. They no longer served as scorekeepers. But that's not a sleaze deal. It's just the fact I didn't think newspaper people should participate in competitive sports if they were going to write about them.

Unions, and the 1968 Strike

Newhall: I have always worried about unionization of reporters. I really regard this newspaper business with some veneration. Again, like the hometown call in the ball park, I'm not sure that reporters and editors should be union members.

We were going through a period in my earlier years of very aggressive and highly-organized unionism. I became a member of the Guild for a while, and then I quit when I got into one of the more executive jobs; I resigned. I don't think the Guild is particularly a problem, but it offended me personally, spiritually, to see a reporter become anything but his own agent. I can't explain it. I just don't think reporting and unionism go together. I don't think it's awfully important now.

The Guild has been pretty good about it. If the Guild had been a society of reporters and writers--now I'm being very sort of caste-conscious, I know--then that would have been fine with me. But I didn't like them hitting the bricks along with cashiers, vendors, and telephone operators, who are very nice people, you know, and the hod carriers. That's all.

Riess: You were at the Chronicle when they struck in 1968.

Newhall: Yes, and we put out the paper. It was a very difficult period, and all I felt was, I did not want to see the Chronicle cease publication. I had no beef. If they want to go in the streets, that's their right. My feelings toward the Chronicle were very personal and very emotional, and I didn't want to see the San

Francisco Bay Area without a daily San Francisco Chronicle.

So Ruth, Stan Arnold, our Sunday editor, Gordon Pates, our managing editor, Hugh Buel, promotion manager, and I put out a little typewritten paper. We pasted it up on wax. Ruth can tell you more about it than I can. We stapled it, I believe, about eight or ten pages and we had it printed somewhere in the East Bay. We covered just the wire news that would come in. And we never missed a day. We put it in all the hotels, and the airport, and stuff like that, just for public sale. It was a little thing, about regular letter size, 8 1/2 x 11.

Ruth will remember it. The Chronicle staff members were all parading up and down outside on the Mission Street sidewalk. One of our women's department people was married on the picket line. I got a case of champagne, and we lowered the bottles down to them on the sidewalk. I tried to keep it on a very friendly basis.

I wrote an editorial in this funny little paper we put out, saying, "Let's not be bitter when this is all over. We've got to get this paper going again." I really didn't want the Chronicle itself, as a living organism, to cease. That probably answers more than you need.

You know, Tony, my son, is now back working at the Chronicle. He may take over Phelps Dewey's job. Phelps is assistant to the publisher. A couple of months ago when Tony was in San Francisco discussing whether he could work out the Chronicle job, he was coming back from lunch with Phelps when he ran into Dick Thieriot, Charlie's son, in the elevator.

Tony said, "Well, I see it's the same old Chronicle. The Pickwick Hotel's still across the street, the old Mint's still there. Nothing much has changed." Then he said, "Gee, I see there's still a Thieriot going up and down in the elevator here." Dick said, "Yeah, I see there's a Newhall going up and down in the elevator, too." Off they went. Anyway, it was a very nice day in my life, to have Tony go back to work at the paper.

Reporters and Columnists: Delaplane and Caen

Riess: (Who is the best reporter you ever met?)

Newhall: I've met a lot of very, very, very good reporters.

Ruth N.: Magnificent reporters. I can name some. I think of Stan Delaplane.

Newhall: He set the style. Also, Charlie Raudebaugh, George Draper, Mike

Grieg, Mike Harris.

Ruth N.: Art Hoppe was an excellent reporter. A lot of these people turned into columnists. Scotty, can you tell one reason why they turned into columnists?

Newhall: Sure--they were great writers.

Ruth N.: There was McCabe, too, Charles McCabe, who was a great writer.

Newhall: Are you talking about writers or reporters now?

Riess: Well, we started out talking about reporters. Isn't it a loss, in some way, if they become columnists?

Newhall: Well, their wares are on display. It is a loss to the reporting staff, yes, but not to the reader.

Riess: They can get their message across better in a column, perhaps?

Newhall: Oh, I don't know about messages. Writers or reporters, what are we talking about?

Riess: We're talking about reporters.

Newhall: Because essentially, there can be a hell of a difference, and it is not, unfortunately--well, you've got me going on another subject now. There used to be reporters and writers. They used to have a bank of rewrite men in most newspapers. I don't know if you're aware of that or not. They'd sit there with their green eyeshades, and they'd just churn out story after story. They would have a bottle of booze on the desk, and off they'd go. They were great writers--fast and smooth.

Ruth N.: The stories would be telephoned in.

Newhall: They would be telephoned in from the beat, and then these fellows, the rewrite men, would write them. They were usually getting on a little bit in years, or weren't quite as energetic, but they could write very, very well, and very fast, and quite clearly, and spell well.

Ruth N.: Some of the best reporters I know are not writers. Nan McEvoy was a wonderful reporter.

Newhall: You'd better identify her.

Ruth N.: Nan McEvoy was the former Nan Tucker, who was a granddaughter of M.H. deYoung and is now the majority stockholder in the Chronicle today. She came to work on the Chronicle when she was in her early twenties. She's about ten years younger than I am, and we worked

together a great deal. She is basically not a writer, but she was extraordinarily skilled at going out. You would tell her what you wanted to know, and she'd go out and find it. That is what I consider a good reporter.

Newhall: Legman.

Ruth N.: Yes, a legman.

Newhall: You see, this is where this bothersome investigative reporting gets me. The good investigative reporters--most of them, I think, are not necessarily good writers. Some of them, sometimes, you do have a good, brilliant combination, but you can get some awfully smart people out in the trenches to dig up anything from anybody. We have a guy who is basically illiterate, a fellow who was a photographer on our latest paper, the Santa Clarita Valley Citizen. He was probably one of the best reporters I've ever known. I don't think he can sign his name. He's a photographer.

Ruth N.: Barely.

Newhall: Yeah. I shouldn't say that. I won't mention his name now, but he's awfully good. Yet some people can write so beautifully. You have to make some kind of relationship--.

Riess: So when you talk about Stan Delaplane, then, what are the qualities?

Ruth N.: He had both. He was a combination.

Newhall: He was a great reporter. He won a Pulitzer, you know, for reporting on the state of Jefferson that some smart local promoters were going to carve out of northern California. He did a series on that. Del's great prize-winning series was whimsy, but it was also fact.

Ruth N.: He went up into the northern counties, and I think he himself got the movement going to form an independent state up there, because they were getting nowhere. In Sacramento the politicians were paying no attention to the northern cow counties, so they were going to form their own state. He managed to do a tremendous series of pieces that staggered the Sacramento establishment, and he won his Pulitzer Prize.

Newhall: It was brilliant writing. The people up there in Siskiyou County loved him. Then Del and Ruth went down to cover the cotton fields at Firebaugh or Mendota.

Riess: Cover the cotton?

Newhall: [laughing] The cotton story--the cotton pickers of Central California. Ruth picked a couple sacks of cotton. Well, they got so plastered, I don't think they ever came home. [laughter]

Ruth N.: We did, we did.

Newhall: Del was a really old-time, classic newspaperman. There's only one I know, right now, anywhere close to him, and that was a kid on the Citizen, Gary Johanson. These people are really old-fashioned story-tellers. They write beautifully. They love to read, and they love people. I can't explain it, exactly.

Riess: I just finished reading that second Russell Baker book, Good Times, and it seems almost like you're being kicked upstairs to become a columnist.

Newhall: It depends.

Ruth N.: This is what had happened. In one or two cases when Scotty dealt with these people who became columnists, Scotty had tried to get raises for them. The Guild was very strong, and while the Guild had accepted the situation when we had to cut out all the people who weren't quite up to par--you know, when the Guild came in, they had to fire a lot of these people who may not have been earning their Guild salaries--on the other hand, it leveled everybody out. So for a while, I don't know how long it lasted, the Chronicle had a policy of never paying anybody above Guild scale. In other words, there were no merit raises for reporters.

The only way a Chronicle writer could get more money was to become a columnist. So two or three of these people became columnists, because otherwise the Chronicle would lose them. There were other papers out bidding for their abilities, and naturally every man, particularly at that age where they're raising young families, has to go out and make money. They became columnists and that was the answer to that stricture on not raising salaries.

Newhall: Sometimes our columnist would be picked up, syndicated, and make quite a lot of money.

Riess: Then did they also continue, without a by-line, working on the paper ever?

Newhall: Not really. Writing a column takes it out of you.

Ruth N.: It takes too much work. A daily column, particularly, is a killing task.

Riess: Did you do the same with the Signal? Elevate people to writing columns?

Newhall: No, all we just wanted to do was get out the paper. But in the Signal, let me add, the whole paper was more of a column. The Chronicle had columns in it, but the Signal was a very personal

production, in a sense. The editorials were on the front page, for example, and they were probably as well read as anything. Ruth did the only real column in both the Signal and the Citizen, and it was probably, per capita, the most widely-read column that ever appeared in a newspaper. I may be wrong.

Riess: It was the gossip column wasn't it?

Newhall: Yeah. It sort of pulled the community together, and it set the cast of characters.

Ruth N.: There were little anecdotes about people to kind of personalize--people like to know where they are and who are the people who are important.

Newhall: This is exactly what Herb Caen achieves so brilliantly in the Chronicle.

Ruth N.: Herb Caen, I think, is the best columnist that's ever been.

Newhall: They don't come down the pike that easily.

Riess: So you'd say that was who you were emulating, if there was someone that you were emulating.

Ruth N.: I couldn't possibly emulate Herb.

Newhall: She filled, though, that need among the readers down here in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Ruth N.: I filled that gap. I couldn't emulate Herb. Herb is such a gifted writer. I wouldn't even want to mention his name in the same breath.

Riess: On the other hand, San Francisco is full of so many characters. Is it possible that this area does not have enough?

Ruth N.: That's only part of it.

Newhall: No, but you have to manufacture them. Remember, San Francisco is so full of these characters because of Herb Caen. He manufactured most of them. Believe me! That is, again, a two-way street.

Ruth N.: He has created something in San Francisco. [to Scott] Have you told about when he [Herb] went over to the Examiner and Paul Smith said, "Columnists come a dime a dozen. I can get someone tomorrow." And he tried half a dozen people, half a dozen people who were very adequate writers. None of them--they just didn't have that magic.

Riess: Where do you get your information, or where did you, as Mimi?

Newhall: Well, the phone's been ringing all afternoon. Still.

Ruth N.: I went places. Just moving around. Of course, once you write a column people tell you things. Once in a while you run dry, and then you just think up something, you know, something about history, maybe, you drag up a little bit of history. I see Herb doing that. I recognize the technique. Every now and then he will describe a trip to Sausalito or something like that, and I realize he's out of items. This is everyone's habit. [to Scott] Excuse me, I interrupted you.

Newhall: I interrupted you.

Riess: Why "Mimi?" [Ruth Newhall's pseudonym]

Ruth N.: Mimi was my mother's name, and Scotty suggested it.

Newhall: Her mother and I didn't get on very well. [laughter] I stole her daughter from her.

Ruth N.: It was just a good column name.

Newhall: You'd better believe it. She didn't speak to Ruth for three years.

Riess: [to Scott] And then how long did it take before she spoke to you?

Newhall: I hoped never.

A Dialogue About Computers and Newspaper Copy

Riess: {Let's talk about major changes in the newspaper craft and the effects of new technology, including jet travel. I suppose the first change is computers.}

Newhall: From typewriters to computers, and the whole newsroom environment has changed, because it's now so quiet. And you have somewhat better-dressed people sitting in there, clicking away at these keyboard computer screens. I don't know how anyone can write on computers, but that's just personal. I feel that a typewriter is necessary to relieve some of the stress and frustrations of creation.

Riess: Because it's physical--pounding on the typewriter.

Newhall: The physical. You can pound away at it, and you can fix it up and edit it with a pencil, and somebody else can bother about cleaning it up. It's been a major change, just in sound. There's a whole different sound in newspaper offices.

You mentioned jet travel. Communication and satellite communication is all instantaneous today. Radio and telegraph did make a lot of changes in breaking important long-distance news stories. I'm talking about deadlines. But now no newspaper can beat the television screen. Oh, maybe in a minor fact or two, here and there. But now--and this is tremendously important--the only thing left for newspapers is to process the news in a more delectable form than the television screen provides.

Riess: So you're talking about a physical change.

Newhall: Well, electronics and modern communication have made a tremendous impact on the content that newspapers must adopt, in the style in which they must present the information.

Riess: And how about a new kind of person that works at this quieter, less physical newspaper?

Ruth N.: I feel very strongly that the technology hasn't changed the personnel as much as the comparative rewards paid in television compared to those in newspaper. The low pay in newspapersis the chief thing that brings a change of personnel. There are better jobs almost everywhere for the kind of people who used to be reporters, and that is the big thing.

To come back to technology: I find, and most of the younger people find, the computer <u>enormously</u> more convenient. Scott misses the pounding and the noise and everything. I don't miss it at all. I just <u>love</u> the ease of operation, the ease of making corrections. It used to be an abomination to make so many mistakes, that you had to correct them. Now you can produce reasonably clean copy all by yourself and turn it over to your editor on the computer. I believe Scott reacts to the computer much as Chester Rowell reacted to the typewriter. Chester Rowell felt very strongly you could not express yourself on the typewriter. He wrote his editorials in longhand. I feel that there is no difference in self-expression. I like the convenience of the computer.

Newhall: I disagree rather remarkably with her [Ruth]. I think she let drift into her conversation that current myth that, gee, the writer can now give his copy clean to the editor. That's what's wrong. They are trying to turn writers into machine operators. They are basically trying to get a writer who will deliver to the press a finished story and do away with the editing of the newspaper. Ruth will say, "No, I go through every word on the computer." Sure. So she's just cleaning up what the computer delivered to her. This whole new electronic technique is an attempt to cut out man jobs, man hours, and short circuit the human brain as the copy goes from an underpaid and under-educated reporter to the idiot on the street who's going to buy today's newspaper.

Ruth N.: I disagree totally. He thinks of struggling with the machine as being a struggle. It is not. It is a great facilitator. Great, to me and to most of the people I know who use the machines.

Newhall: If you have time for it, it's swell.

Ruth N.: It doesn't take any more time.

Newhall: It takes a lot more time.

Ruth N.: I've been an editor on both, and this is--

Newhall: [chuckles] I'm just laughing.

Ruth N.: Well, so am I.

Riess: [laughs] I guess I will, too, then. [laughter]

Newhall: So let me say this. What I'm getting to is that the problem with newspapers today is that they're so much slower in production than they used to be.

Ruth N.: I cannot agree with that.

Newhall: She doesn't agree. I will give you a figure right now, and I absolutely will stand behind it. When I started as a photographer in the Chronicle, we could get a news picture on the city editor's desk about four minutes after walking through the front door into the office. It now takes twenty minutes.

Ruth N.: It depends on who you have operating.

Newhall: No. Have you ever seen, with all modern cameras and things, any fast, productive photographic magic?

Ruth N.: You're talking about cameras. I'm talking about type.

Newhall: I was just speaking of cameras, so far. Now, do you question that, that the old 4 x 5 cut film system was faster?

Ruth N.: Yes, I do. Then it had to go to the engraver.

Newhall: That's right. I've said to the editor's desk.

Ruth N.: But you're talking about production.

Newhall: There have been many changes in production that have speeded this up, but we were talking about editing now, and writing, I believe.

Ruth N.: You're talking only about pictures.

Newhall: I started about pictures; that was the first thing I said.

I'm a slow writer, but I can turn out and edit my copy with a typewriter and a pencil faster than most of you guys can do it on a machine.

Ruth N.: I disagree with that.

Newhall: Well, this is going to be personal, because I'm kind of slow.

These kids now will cover a story about how some supervisor has got his hand in the till, you know, and they're going to do a piece on it. They'll come in, and they'll knock it out on the computer, in your paper, the Signal, or the Citizen, and give it to you. If it's clean, you'll send it through, and usually it's a piece of garbage.

Ruth N.: I will not send it through.

Newhall: It's garbage--most if it.

Riess: Why is it garbage?

Newhall: Because the kids are in a hurry, and they can't write, and with a machine they think they can write faster.

Ruth N.: We had some excellent writers, and they turned out excellent copy. We had some poor writers, and they turned out poor copy. It was not the machine.

Newhall: I didn't say they didn't, but they didn't save any time on the machines.

Ruth N.: It saved an awful lot of time. I wrote copy. I was able to write a column and sometimes three or four stories, and edit the whole paper, which I could not have done, I could never have done, had it been in typewritten form.

Riess: Well, maybe either of you could have done any of these things better than any of these people who are coming along can do them now.

Ruth N.: We're much more experienced than they are.

Riess: A lot of people compose and think as the machine comes on. They turns on the machine, and they turn on their thinking.

Ruth N.: It's totally individual.

Newhall: I'll go along with that. I was not brought up to do it and I refuse to, because, manually, I cannot. Honestly I just cannot handle an electronic machine. I make so many errors typing it that I would

spend my whole time going back and looking for that button to push to delete.

Ruth N.: It bothers him because he's not adept at all.

Newhall: I write on a typewriter, and if I'm in a mood to write, I won't even stop. I just write something. If I want to correct it, I write it again, and write it again, and then the final correcting is much faster with a pencil.

Riess: Is this a big issue in newspapers?

Newhall: Well, between us.

Riess: I know between you.

Ruth N.: No, there is nobody left in his category. He's the last of a breed.

Newhall: She keeps saying that. It's not true. Shall we talk about Emory Holmes? He would have been at home in a typewriter, and he probably was brought up on a typewriter. This is the black fellow we were talking about who wrote for the Citizen and the Signal, and now may go up to the Chronicle.

Ruth N.: He writes beautifully, and he has no problem with it [the computer].

Newhall: He does, but I don't know how much the machine takes out of him. I'm serious!

That's enough of that.

Riess: That's right. The tape recorder is one of the machines that must have come into the business since you got into it. Has that been a good thing?

Newhall: It's a wonderful thing.

Ruth N.: Only occasionally. I don't believe in tape recorders. There are times when they are useful, if you want to pick up an exact quote at certain times. I have watched reporters who depend on tape recorders. They see that their tape recorder runs through the whole interview, and then they come back and have to process it through their heads. They lose all that time.

Newhall: I think it depends on the individual.

Ruth N.: Yes, once more.

Newsrooms Mirroring Social Change

Riess: (Since you "broke in"--I like that term for getting into the newspaper business--since you broke in, what are the changes in the ethnic, cultural, religious, and class backgrounds of people in the newsroom?)

Newhall: Well, to me it has simply mirrored what has been happening in the 1970s--awakening interest among the American people to problems in our democratic society, including the female of the species, and the racial background of people. And the handicapped. They come up with all these double-barreled adjectives about people. They're no longer cripples; they're "physically impaired." They're no longer poor; they're "disadvantaged financially" or something.

Ruth N.: Economically disadvantaged. Aside from that, it's just a total reflection.

Riess: And have papers suffered from it or gained from it?

Newhall: Myself, I think both. I suppose we're talking about "affirmative action." I think the whole nation has gained and also suffered from it. When I say the whole nation--the system, I think, has suffered to a certain extent, but the citizens, I think, have gained. Jobs have loosened up for some people, but there has been a period of stereotypes for the last ten or twenty years, where you have to have so many women, or so many Latinos, or so many blacks, or whatever or whomever.

I'm going to mention this. We've been talking about Emory Holmes, this black guy. I think I can sort of answer that it's had an impact with this: the Chronicle is desperate, it seems. (I thought they got over this.) When the Citizen closed down, the Chronicle was interested in two of our writers. One of them is Emory Holmes. This guy is black. I mean, he's really black, he's amazing. The Chronicle called up about these two writers. Of course they couldn't see Emory's color in a by-line, but when they heard he was a black guy he was numero uno. They're interviewing him today or tomorrow. They're dying to get him on, because everybody's trying to be good. They're trying to satisfy all the liberals and all the people.

Riess: But will the readers know that he's black?

Newhall: Well, he'll be visible around town. Then they won't get under attack from the ACLU or whatever it is.

Riess: Is that the issue? It's not that newspapers were being written by white people for white people, and that to get wider readership you have to have a wider representation on the staff?

Ruth N.: No. That's not a consideration.

Newhall: It's a visible thing. It's a posture again. It's a stage setting. Newspapers are written, or should be written, by people for people. Period. Who cares what the color of a guy is or what the sex of a person is sitting behind the typewriter?

Ruth N.: You see many, many more women in newsrooms now. Well, you see it in the whole society. This is a conscious effort. More people of various ethnic backgrounds. As you said, it goes through the whole society. However, I don't think it is a conscious thing with newspapers to get readers. It's a conscious thing to go along with this whole social movement.

Newhall: Yeah, it's internal.

Ruth N.: And I think it's being successful.

Newhall: This is all a very difficult, very sensitive, perceptive question. If you run a newspaper in a community, and the newspaper is suddenly going to be represented by an Anglo guy with a bad chin and a beard, or a young fellow who comes out of a good school, or a black, or a woman, or a Latino--well, it may have an impact on the story that that person is sent out to cover. This is an area--perhaps you don't quite follow what I'm getting into.

Riess: In anthropological research you send an Indian out to interview an Indian.

Newhall: It may be the worst possible thing you can do, but oh well.

Riess: Well, in the kind of groups where they really have traditionally never talked about those questions with outsiders--.

Newhall: Ah, yeah, sure. Sure.

Riess: Does that happen also in the news business, though?

Newhall: I try not to do it. Once in a while. If you're going to have a meeting of the KKK, which we've had down there, you'd be inclined not to send a black reporter out, I think, if you want to get the story. Or you'd send out a black and white. Then you'd get a <u>good</u> story. I don't know if that answers it or not, but there are stories that do call for certain kinds of journalistic attention.

Riess: (Changes in the number and role of women journalists--.) We [Ruth Newhall and Riess] were talking about that a little bit this morning. It sounds like there are more, and their role is wider.

Ruth N.: Right, just like in the whole legal profession, and the medical

profession, and business--in all forms of activity.

Newhall: Which is very good and reasonable. You know, there were lots of women at the Chronicle in World War II on This World magazine. That was the best staff we ever had. The men had to get a job when they came back. The women were sure good, the ones we had. But I should mention, if I haven't, that the reason there was only one woman on the city staff of the Chronicle ever since I knew that paper, until Ruth finally broke the barrier, was a girl called Carolyn Anspacher. She wouldn't allow another woman on the territory. I mean, she wouldn't. She was a bitch. That's what they called her. I loved Carolyn. We got on pretty well. Ruth was the only woman she allowed on the city side.

Ruth N.: They asked her advice whether they could hire me.

Newhall: She was an old-fashioned sob sister. She was a smart girl. She came from Cal. She was in the dramatic arts there, and she lived and wrote and died in a kind of a Shakespearean fashion, sort of a lady Hamlet. Carolyn, she was something.

Riess: (When did reporters stop wearing hats?)

Ruth N.: They stopped when the whole society stopped. This is a hatless society in California.

Riess: And they wore the hats in the newsroom?

Newhall: Oh, some of them would. They always did in the play, Front Page, and so the reporters followed whatever they saw on the stage, I think. Walter Winchell always wore a hat. You know, a fedora or a gray felt hat.

Ruth N.: But that's an eastern custom, more.

Newhall: I wore a hat as a kid, but they quit wearing hats in my generation.

Ruth N.: Yes. They quit before we grew up.

Newhall: Everyone wore one on their way to school.

Educating Journalists to be Writers

Riess: (What changes have occurred in the educational background of your colleagues?) I guess we should narrow that one down to the Signal. When you came down here and took over the Signal, did you have the same kind of staff and the same quality of people that you could call on?

Newhall: We couldn't afford it.

Ruth N.: There were only about three people on the staff, number one, and there were only two people on the editorial staff for a long time.

Newhall: We would have a managing editor and a couple of reporters.

Ruth N.: One reporter.

Newhall: But they were all totally beginners, or what they now call "entry level."

Riess: Out-of-journalism-school beginners?

Newhall: Depends. Most of them. We couldn't hire somebody who was working. We just didn't have the money.

Riess: So that means, then, that you've trained a lot of people, in some way, in your mold.

Newhall: Some of them. Some of them don't buy it, you know, and wander on. It's hard to get somebody who can be trained.

Ruth N.: We've had a lot of good, loyal people--a lot.

Newhall: Oh, yeah, but we've had an awful lot we can't wait to get rid of because they don't understand or don't have the talent. It's really difficult.

Ruth N.: You get a talented person, and you enjoy it, and they enjoy it, and it goes marvelously. It's a highly individual activity.

Riess: It sounds like from what you said yesterday, that there are two talents: the Nan Tucker McEvoy who's the great reporter, and then there's the writing talent. In the small paper, you have to get the two in one.

Newhall: She [Ruth] has to sit there and edit their copy. She can tell you about it. One out of ten can write a paragraph. [to Ruth] What do you think?

Ruth N.: I'd say more than that, but they all need a great deal of instruction, and it's the kind of instruction they do not get in journalism school. It has prejudiced me deeply against journalism school.

Newhall: You can't instruct them to spell.

Ruth N.: You can't instruct them in grammar, apparently. They ought to exclude them from the field when they show much incapacity at the

craft of the English language.

Newhall: Ruth is very heavy on grammar and spelling.

Ruth N.: And also on narrative style.

Newhall: And on a certain amount of style. [to Ruth] Your sights are very high, and you expect a Ph.D. or at least an M.A. to work for you for $275 a week.

Ruth N.: I just expect someone with a common knowledge of English and a little bit of knowledge of the world about them. It takes an awful lot of editing.

Newhall: Ruth expects somebody to come and apply for a job who's had seventy years of experience traveling around the world, who has college degrees, who--

Ruth N.: I don't expect. Now, really. I don't expect. We have this whole series of elementary rules that we give them when they come in, and they have to learn them. They get screamed at if they don't pay attention.

Newhall: "They get screamed at" is right.

Riess: Those are rules of grammar or style?

Ruth N.: Yes. Rules of grammar, style, approach to a story--little rules and big rules. There are rules of interviewing, all kinds of rules.

Newhall: Some great writers can't spell.

Ruth N.: They should have learned in college.

Newhall: I do not venerate spelling as the criterion that she does, because many, many great writers don't spell worth a damn.

Ruth N.: No, it is not the definitive. Emory's a bad speller.

Newhall: I think it helps, but it doesn't have much to do with writing.

Ruth N.: It helps, and if they consistently misspell common words, you post them on their board so they learn. They learn.

Newhall: All I'm saying is, if you took a great story written by one of these illiterate spellers or whatever, and you read it to them, dictated it to a secretary and had her type it, the story would be there, and the misspelling would be gone.

Riess: When did you develop these rules?

Ruth N.: Oh, over time you begin to see the common errors that everybody makes, and the things that they mislearned in journalism school.

Riess: But it was down here, with the Signal, that this became your role, and you were able to define everything.

Ruth N.: Yes. This is where I became an editor rather than just a reporter or writer. Up till then, on the Chronicle, I was a writer or various different things.

Newhall: Great capabilities.

Ruth N.: No. I was just a very ordinary writer. But down here I had to prepare other people's copy for the paper. They are taught to write things down to a common level of dullness, and I'm trying to get them to spark it up, so to speak.

Riess: Is this the distinction between the old idea that the story started out with the who, what, where, why, and then proceeded, and that you could always lop off the last two-thirds of it?

Ruth N.: Yes. That is writing for the Associated Press.

Newhall: That came in with the wire services.

Ruth N.: It came in with the wire services and should go out with the local editor.

Newhall: But it was a very, very, very valuable device.

Ruth N.: Very valuable. It should be taught as an alternate rule to all freshmen.

Newhall: It teaches you what to look for. You've got to learn that first.

Ruth N.: Oh, yes. You learn that, but then you learn to write. But many of them never got past that.

Newhall: But the press services do it, as I'm sure you know, simply because they service a lot of papers and can start trimming from the end in a hurry to make it fit.

Ruth N.: But that's a tool. That has nothing to do with writing for your own paper.

Newhall: Except that's what people have learned.

Ruth N.: What?

Newhall: Except that that's the style that has developed.

Riess: Well, are they still learning that? Is that one of the things that you have to reteach?

Ruth N.: That's the way. You read the stories in the papers that are coming out today, and they have never gotten past Journalism I. Nobody is teaching them. This bothers me very much. On some of the bigger papers you get some excellent writers. You get good writers on the Chronicle, on the Los Angeles Times--not all, but you'll find some.

Newhall: While we're on the subject of writing, let me remark the importance of the written words. If papers do not write and present the news for the people that they wish to reach, they will fail. The Los Angeles Times, for example, is an extremely well-written newspaper. People will read it. If a paper is not well-written--we're talking about well-written papers. There are lots of papers that have pictures of naked women in them, or stuff like that you pick up in the supermarket, they're very successful if the woman is well-designed. But in terms of literature, a newspaper, in telling the news, has got to tell it well or they will just lose their audience.

Riess: So the only level on which they can compete with television is to write better and better and better.

Newhall: In my opinion absolutely and I pray that the written word will survive.

Ruth N.: Yes, I think there's an enormous field there, if you can make people enjoy reading. Enjoyment is the answer. I'm not talking about your border illiterates. I'm talking about the average educated person that you want to read your newspaper. The average, middle-class person will read something that he enjoys reading. Enjoyment is not part of the training of most of these young, would-be writers.

Riess: Their sense is of mission and duty or something like that?

Newhall: Oh, they do come along. They do.

I think the real value of journalistic education is for the student to learn what and why a newspaper is--what it represents, what its role is, what its responsibility is, what its power is, and why, and what it means at the moment to our Republican-Democratic society. A lot of kids, I'm afraid, don't even know what a newspaper is.

Ruth N.: What its historic and social role is. And that is not suitable for undergraduate training, because they don't have the background.

Newhall: We taught at Cal, when I was there, the history of American journalism.

Ruth N.: A little bit, yes.

Newhall: You go back to John Peter Zenger and a little before. Every kid should know something about the so-called freedom of the press, the history and the role of the paper.

Ruth N.: But I have a great feeling that undergraduates very seldom understand that.

Newhall: Possibly. Probably.

Killing Stories, and Journalistic Ethics##

Riess: (Over the years, were you ever asked to kill a story?)

Newhall: It happened very infrequently in the Chronicle. It happens all over the country every day, believe me. Every day. One time--. The Ridder family, a very famous national American newspaper publishing family from San Jose and back in the East and so on, Joe Ridder was picked up for drunk driving down in San Jose. I was sitting in Charlie Thieriot's office. Joe had the gall to call Charlie and ask Charlie to kill the story that he was picked up for drunk driving. Now, if a publisher or editor is picked up for drunk driving, that's his problem, and we damn well ought to run it. When my son was picked up for cultivating marijuana down here in Newhall, we ran it on the front page under a large headline.

But Charlie said, "Okay, Joe forget it. You owe me one." That kind of stuff goes on. I never would have got involved in it in my life. I had to do some very, very, very painful things about what's happened to members of my family and my friends.

[to Ruth] You had another story.

Ruth N.: There was one time when I remember a managing editor just putting a story away in his desk because it ran counter to his political opinions at the time. And he was let go, basically. That was the trigger that ended his career at the Chronicle. He went on to a distinguished career elsewhere, but he did put that away. At the time, he was leftist-oriented--very affiliated with those groups. Some long study that somebody had done didn't jibe with the tenets that he was espousing, and he stuck it in his drawer. There it stayed, and that was the end of that particular career, at the Chronicle.

Newhall: These were very, very minor, infrequent things.

Ruth N.: Very infrequent.

Riess: So that they're the exceptions that prove the rule?

Newhall: I didn't say any rule. All I'm talking about is the San Francisco Chronicle.

Ruth N.: And little newspapers all over the country--

Newhall: Oh, they'll kill stuff all day long.

Ruth N.: Yes. They will kill things and do things at the order of the chambers of commerce.

Newhall: About half of them.

Ruth N.: I get these stories all the time from reporters that come in from other small newspapers, saying, "I wrote a story on this and the advertisers didn't let it run," or "I took a picture and the advertiser thought it wasn't flattering, and I got fired over it."

Newhall: Half the reporters in the country have quit because of those things. Half of them take it for granted. I don't think you can come up with a rule on it.

Ruth N.: One of the best things to ever happen to us in the business--it didn't look like it at the time--was having Jon arrested for growing a marijuana plant. Or five marijuana plants. The reason it was a good thing was because thereafter, over the years, when people came in saying, "Don't print my name in the drunk driving column," we would just point back to that, saying we don't suppress the news.

Newhall: Everybody has his turn.

Riess: Is it in journalism schools that you learn about the ethics of the profession?

Newhall: If they will teach them what a newspaper is and what it should be, that's great. But they're making missionaries out of a lot of the beginners now, instead of reporters. I can't explain it too well. Your job is not to go out and preach the gospel; it's to write stories about people who are preaching the gospel. I don't know how else to say it.

Riess: I was actually surprised last night at the degree of horror you registered to think about credentialing [giving press rights] to people who were not reporters.

Newhall: Oh, it's terrible. I keep saying a newspaper reporter, let alone an editor or publisher, is one of the most privileged human beings on earth. He can go anywhere. All doors are open to him. Public bodies must listen to him. I'm speaking kind of in an ideal way in this country.

Ruth N.: They have a lot of power.

Newhall: They have power, privilege, and they are extended unbelievable courtesies. They can be in on all kinds of exciting things that will, in some way, influence society. Therefore, to do anything to destroy the credibility, the image, or the true role of the newspaper representative is, I think, a terrible, terrible sin.

Ruth N.: If we are going to, as newspaper people, accept these privileges, we must be honorable about it, or we will destroy it.

Riess: (Aside from direct requests, do you recall any subtle ways that pressure was applied to influence your professional standards?)

Ruth N.: We try very hard to limit the Christmas presents, the favors, and all that sort of obvious kind of favor-buying. Everybody tries that.

Newhall: Stores and promoters around town will send over a turkey or something at Christmas to the newspaper offices and stuff like that --have a big party and drink the booze and carve the turkey. It's very minor. You know, so George Mardikian's restaurant gets a good mention in Herb. I don't know whether he gave Herb a turkey, I don't think so. Herb doesn't take much, if anything.

Riess: (Did you ever kill or change a story out of personal concern?) That harks back to the case of Jon, and the answer is no?

Newhall: No. On the other side of that, I've had to write some very, very painful stories about people who were my close friends. I always had to tell them ahead of time, and I did. I said, "Please understand or please forgive." [See earlier story of Charlie Camp and his son Roddy's suicide.] Those are very difficult problems.

Riess: In cases like that, you talk to the people ahead of time.

Newhall: Oh, I always do. Always, if I personally knew them or if they had called in, I would try to explain it in this sort of vapid way about the mystery and responsibilities of the omniscient press and what it all meant.

Riess: But you couldn't have been omniscient, and there must have been many stories in the Chronicle that you didn't know about that hit you the next day.

Newhall: Not much.

Riess: How could you be in touch with everything in the paper every day?

Newhall: I knew just about everything that was happening in the paper. I was

in pretty close touch, believe me. You know, it wasn't I. We had the greatest editors in history, I think--Abe Mellinkoff, and Bill German, Stan Arnold and Gordon Pates. Golly! We could do anything with the paper. And there was always Dolly around to keep the pieces together and the animals under control.

Riess: So you would absolutely trust them.

Newhall: Oh, totally.

Riess: On those days, for instance, when you were locked up with Charlie?

Newhall: Dolly had to keep it all going. When Charlie came in for an extended period she would go to her outside desk in Stan Arnold's office. Oh, I could be gone for six months and they--and Dolly--would put out this paper, absolutely. If it was something that they didn't automatically agree with, or knew I might debate, it was not a dictatorship. We always, I think, just worked together.

Riess: When we talk about newspaper photography, it's clear you still have a passionate concern for it. {What changes have occurred there?}

Newhall: I'm very old-fashioned, but I do care about it because it could be better. Today, 1989, more and more papers are running color pictures, which I have many doubts about, because newsprint is not good, slick paper. They're getting a little better all right, but color is for TV, and color is for the magazines, and so on. This, again, is old-fashioned, I guess I would call it.

I was earlier saying that when I first became a photographer we had some very primitive devices, but they were fast. We could bring a picture in, have it developed, washed, and a print made and on the editor's desk within a matter of a very few minutes--and I mean five minutes.

Riess: I had no idea that it could be done that fast.

Newhall: But now, you see, they've got all this marvelous new technique, which is going down the tubes now, because of electronics. Nevertheless, they've had these little cameras, the type you use, thirty-five millimeter--I went to work, by the way, with a thirty-five millimeter camera. And I said, "This is the world of tomorrow, fellas, and we're going to have little candid photos." But basically we were still using Speed Graphics with cut film. With cut film, you just take it in, slam it into the developer, slam it into the fix, and throw it up wet into the enlarger, and you'll come out with your picture. Now it's a little cumbersome, the rest of the mechanical process.

Riess: You can deal with it wet?

Newhall: Oh, yeah, that's the whole point. It is cumbersome to dry these tiny little negatives fast enough. I was telling them at the Signal and the Citizen, "For God's sake, will you get some kind of frame, and you can run your negatives through wet," because the drying takes ten, fifteen minutes. Well, for me today to sit around waiting twenty minutes for a lousy, stinking picture to come up--I can't stand it. I'm serious about that. I think it's a very great weakness. Maybe they can do it faster. I'm sure they must in the larger papers. I don't know. But there is a very significant wait, and I'd rather use a Polaroid, which everybody laughs at.

Riess: I see that the L.A. Times does run a color front page photo. It's almost a substitute for a banner headline. I mean, it's the thing that you see.

Newhall: Yeah. That's right, and it's changing there. I think of newspapers in black and white, and I'm sure I will be proved quite wrong. Again, I don't want to see color type. You know, you read black type. Color newspaper photos don't mean anything to me, because--I don't know, they just don't.

Cares and Woes

Riess: Karl Kortum said to me, about you, "Scott can't help but react to calls for help. Imagine the number of people with problems who talk to him every day. But he never has had the newspaperman's normal defense--cynicism. Instead, he has developed a kind of detachment. He sits back, listens, and doesn't talk much, but he knows exactly what's going on. He's happiest, I suppose, in his own thoughts, but he can't stop caring, and caring will kill him someday."

Newhall: [muttering] Son of a bitch. [to Ruth] You answer it.

Ruth N.: I think that's correct, but I don't think caring is going to kill him. I think he's very practical. I think he does care about things very, very much--all kinds of things--but I don't think that that's a destructive thing. I don't think he plunges into things to the point of destruction.

Newhall: Like the Citizen?

Ruth N.: You pulled out when it began to get dangerous, yes.

Newhall: I think Karl is right. I'm trying to look at it quite objectively. I care. This is why I've been in the business. I care so deeply--you know, every guy has a little Messiah in him. I've got a lot. Ruth will tell you. Lately, I can't sit and watch television. I've been getting so upset and excited, I get up and walk out and sit by

the pool. [to Ruth] Isn't that true?

Ruth N.: Yes, that's true.

Newhall: I can't stand it when I see journalism baying down the wrong track, paying attention to the wrong things--I hate the words "right" and "wrong"--paying attention to things that are not of consequence, historically, to us. To me, America is the world. It is paradise for humans, and we are constantly destroying ourselves. I care. That's why I've been in the newspapers in the last few years. It gave me a soapbox on which to expound my cares, and my irritation, and my frustrations, and my fury. I think Karl is quite right, frankly, objectively. Things do matter to me a great deal.

Riess: He talks about the newspaperman's normal defense being cynicism.

Newhall: Yeah. You know, you look at your first dead body, and you have to protect yourself. Again, that's why you've got the Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur plays, in which they'll sit around and make jokes about the "stiff" this, that, or the other, because death is not necessarily the most beautiful visual experience in the world. So the old newspaperman was a cynic--wisecracking, fast-talking, sometimes well-educated and frequently very literate.

Ruth N.: You see a great many horrible things in this business.

Newhall: Yeah, and you don't want your own concerns and fears and depressions necessarily to haunt your writing. I can't explain it all.

Riess: [to Ruth] So he's not a cynic.

Ruth N.: No, no.

Newhall: Well, I am a cynic.

Ruth N.: Oh, you're a cynic in--

Newhall: In a sense. But a cynic is a person who cares, believe me. I'll tell you who really cared, and that's Mencken. He was, in a sense, one of the world's greatest cynics.

Ruth N.: You're a cynic about a lot of phonies. You slap the label on a phony very easily. I don't mean you use that word.

Newhall: Oh, you mean people that matter. The only three people who really matter are the three of us sitting here. I don't know about you two all the time--[laughter]

Riess: Why is it that you are reading about the Roman empire?

Newhall: I think we in America are reliving the Roman empire, totally.

Ruth N.: He reads history of all kinds.

Riess: The decline and fall is what we are reliving?

Newhall: Well, yes, everything, but at the moment I am drifting through Plutarch. We're about at a little bit before Caesar.

Riess: What kinds of insights does it give you, two hours with Gibbon?

Newhall: He's such a marvelous writer. I guess he could write about anything. It's way overwritten, by the way, but it's marvelous. To me, his grasp and descriptions of humans and social structures are the most remarkable, most delicious I've ever read. And I hadn't read him, you know. I've always had a copy around somewhere, but it's always a formidable-looking thing. But, oh! His descriptions of social order are something! I could read you part of a chapter on the Christian church. He had them tagged, but he was very warm, he was never bitter.

Ruth N.: Don't use up the tape. [laughter]

Riess: Maybe it would be fun to run a column by him in the paper.

Newhall: Gibbon? Yeah. Could be, easily. It would frighten a lot of people, would infuriate a lot of people, if they could understand what he was saying. I could read you one sentence about the Christian monks and the ascetics, you know, the hermits and stuff--this guy, he's got people typed.

Glamour, and the Good Old Days

Riess: Somebody referred to the relationship between the two of you as a Tracy-Hepburn relationship. I had to come down here to see the Hepburn end of things.

Newhall: I think Katharine Hepburn came out ahead on that relationship. She's still around. [laughter]

Riess: It was defined as "black-tie dinners with the world's Who's Who, safaris through steaming jungles, thousands of miles sailed through storm and saline beauty, and, of course, the mighty Signal." This was the article in the Santa Clarita Valley Magazine.

Newhall: They're all the same article--just rewritten.

Riess: But there's a lot of glamour attached to the two of you.

Newhall: To other people, perhaps. It's been our life, you know.

Ruth N.: We don't go around doing glamorous things.

Newhall: You know, we're the luckiest two people in the world, Suzanne, to be perfectly honest. In my opinion, nobody now can ever experience the wonderful discovery of this planet that we were able to explore in the 1930s, because in the 1930s there were so few people. The world was still made up of all these different communities, and different cultures, and different languages, and now the world has turned into one big automobile row with Bob's Big Boy Restaurant or McDonald's, or a Howard Johnson's Motel at every other corner.

Ruth N.: We went through Mexico at a time when it was very, very much like when--who was the man that made the early trips? My mind has gone blank.

Newhall: I'll tell you in a minute. Englishman--Jennings. No, not Jennings.

Ruth N: No, he was an American, and he made these trips about 1830.

Newhall: Incidents of Travel in Yucatan and Central America.

Ruth N.: Yes.

Newhall: One of the volumes is upstairs. It was Stephens--John Stephens.

Ruth N.: Yes. Anyhow, the stories and descriptions he gives in the 1830s were very similar. They hadn't changed in the 1930s.

Newhall: The change in Mexico came starting about '34.

Ruth N.: The change came, and the population, of course, exploded. That was what made the difference.

Newhall: World War II has changed the world--enormously.

Riess: You call this luck?

Newhall: Well, we were lucky to have lived then. That's what I'm saying. You can't do it now, because wherever you go you will find the same hotel, the same restaurant, the same shops selling the same shoddy material. That's why I don't want to go traveling too much in Europe. It's been destroyed. Have you seen it lately? Jesus!

Riess: You were talking earlier about how you feel that this place [home in Piru] has what you were looking for in your travels.

Newhall: Yes, but our home here in Piru will be destroyed ike that some day. Somebody will come along, buy the old mansion, and make a bed-and-breakfast out of it. Then pretty soon they'll put in cabins and

they'll knock out the trees and gardens and orchards, sell the air rights, and put something else up here, and it'll be gone. Honest!

Riess: Are you planning to do anything about that?

Ruth N.: Nothing. We are going to be dead.

Newhall: Unless we give it to the state and say, "Well, if you're interested in it--"

Ruth N.: The state can't afford to maintain it. It's expensive to maintain.

Riess: Back to the romance.

Ruth N.: I don't know enough about Tracy-Hepburn.

Newhall: She was pretty tough to get along with. She was named "Woman of the Year," and [to Ruth] so were you. That's true. I quit drinking, but he got drunk and came struggling onstage as she was making her acceptance speech.

Ruth N.: I never had that much power.

Newhall: She [Hepburn] did, or she thought so. Spencer Tracy was the top dog there, but they had a hard time.

Ruth N.: He [Scott] spent the first five years of our marriage making sure I knew my place, because I <u>was</u> older, and I was quite confident.

Newhall: She never learned who was at the head of the family. [laughter]

Riess: [to Scott] She [Ruth] said that you promised that you would be making ten thousand a year when you were twenty-five.

Ruth N.: No. When you were thirty. And when you were thirty-five--that was it, when you were thirty-five you would be making the income generated by a million dollars.

Newhall: I don't think I quite made it.

Ruth N.: You did. Just about.

Newhall: Well, it depends what a million dollars is worth these days. No, we were ambitious. You know, we were broke. Nobody, nobody, nobody believes it. We were broke, with no light at the end of the tunnel that we saw.

Ruth N.: We had a lot of pressure as the children were growing up.

Newhall: We hocked everything we had to educate them. We felt an education was necessary so that they could take care of themselves when the

big bombs came, or something. But no matter how broke we were it was a wonderful, wonderful world, and I don't think it's such a wonderful, wonderful world anymore, because there are too many people in it for all of them to enjoy the comforts they may deserve.

Ruth N.: [to Scott Newhall, who has left and returned] We were talking about Berkeley.

Newhall: The junk people on the street. Boy, what a scene.

Ruth N.: First the businessmen wrecked Berkeley by trying to make too much money out of their little subdivisions instead of beautifying that locale, and then the left movement people came along and just ruined it with clutter and messiness and deprivation. It's too bad. And they never had the proper newspaper to lead them, either. [Ruth N. leaves]

Developing a Vision of Shangri-La

Riess: In Ruth's book [The Newhall Ranch, Huntington Library, 1958], she ends saying, "If the city dwellers come to establish houses, schools and factories on the Newhall ranch, it will be nothing more than H.M. Newhall expected. He lived and made his fortune furthering growth and development. The ranches today and the outlook for the future stand as a testimonial, et cetera, et cetera, to all of this." So it was in the cards that there would be growth and development?

Newhall: It was in the cards that someday Los Angeles was going to expand, I guess.

Riess: And then you came down here to run the newspaper, and you got closer to that expansion.

Newhall: Well, I was much more active with the Farming Company before I got the newspaper. Then I had to pull back from active involvement.

After seeing this wonderful world, and then seeing all the problems and seeing some of the ugliness and some of the beauty, I had hoped that whatever heritage I was involved with would somehow provide the Santa Clarita Valley wih a kind of practical Shangri-La.

In the early 1950s the Farming Company decided to develop our own land ourselves, instead of selling it to developers. I had hoped we could build a park--that's a pretty short description--that we could build a garden instead of a ghetto. So the Farming Company hired the best planners, and they came up with some beautiful concepts.

I held a meeting and chaired it. We included every one of our architects, and our executives, and farmers and all the planning consultants, and planning designers, and people who were going to be involved in our city building effort. I said, "The first thing you have to do when you start building is this, you have to build a community in which you accept the automobile as a machine or a conveyance that is here to stay. Then you must, somehow, resolve the problem of separating life--family life, home life, pedestrian life--from the automobile."

Unfortunately, we had a little problem building a Utopia out here in the Santa Clarita Valley. You see the problem is that southern California is filled up almost exclusively with human turnips. But we have tried. It hasn't been perfect. You see, out here in the Santa Clarita Valley we're approaching gridlock now. We've built these homes. But there are pedestrian malls and paseos and cluster communities. They are not, every one of them, an Italian hill town or Positano, Italy, or something like that, but they're better, rather than worse, I think.

Riess: Did you have to lobby the rest of the board on these issues?

Newhall: Well, I used to be, always, somewhat vocal. I tried to be poetic as well as practical. I think we made more money because we did our developing better, but it takes more money going in. I really was hitting them up. I mentioned it just casually yesterday. I was really lobbying them for water, water, water, water for pools.

I said, "You've got a desert here. You want to make a fortune out of it? Put water into it." Look what they've done with Palm Springs and places like that. It's all an illusion. They've got this vast desert. You put some pools in. This is a nice little pool right here [pointing to patio pool of Newhall house]. And green, and plants, and give these poor people seeking an oasis what they're looking for.

We've done pretty well. We haven't done as well as some of the developers. I think Irvine, on the whole, is better, Westlake may be better. These are developments down here in southern California. You've seen them up north. You've seen them out along the ocean.

Riess: You said that you were most active with the Farming Company before you came down.

Newhall: Atholl McBean wanted me to take it over--I mentioned it before--become president or chairman. I said, "No, I'm in the newspaper business," so I never did make it. But there was no one else in the family who was sort of interested. That's all. I was always a very, very small up and down shareholder. But Ruth and I have been more or less the center of the family's joint familial interest in

this, and we've been able to fairly well keep in touch. Of course, you see, the family owns only about 35 percent of the company now, in terms of shares, but they still are very well-represented on the board of directors. Things go along.

Riess: What are the planning entities here? Are you under the county of Los Angeles. Or the city?

Newhall: Both. The city of Santa Clarita is a little piece right in the center of the valley. But most of the present building explosion is county.

Riess: And has the complexion of these planning groups changed over the years so that growth has been slowed?

Newhall: Oh, that is a long and involved situation. Billions of dollars have been made in Los Angeles County by the supervisors, and by their friends, the developers, out of the growth of Los Angeles County. Generally speaking, nothing can be built without a permit from the county. You have one supervisor who is in charge of the whole northern section of Los Angeles County--I've never been able to nail him for how much money he gets--but they get into office by going to the developers, including the Farming Company, and everybody pays a thousand dollars a seat for a table at the banquet. I once went to one. This is big political money. I mean, this is <u>big</u>. I don't know where this guy's got his safe deposit boxes. They're probably in Switzerland or Panama or somewhere.

Riess: Aren't there citizen groups who would just absolutely eat them alive?

Newhall: Oh, southern California politicians are running around as if they were Bourbon kings just before the French Revolution. But you can't get at them. You can't touch them. You can't nail them. We've never been able to. The Farming Company has donated money, many dollars, legally, from their point of view, for political banquets and such. But I'm sure he takes money from his campaign and so on. But this is a whole long story in itself. That is one reason that Los Angeles County is so scarified. [Ruth N. returns] [to Ruth] I was trying to talk a little bit about the planning process in Los Angeles County.

The Farming Company lives or dies on what they call the "entitlements" that they get. Entitlement means a county or city permit to build a city, to build a water company--or some other such benevolence.

Ruth N.: The approval from the planning commission.

Newhall: Yeah, the approval from the planning commission. The planning commission is totally a creature of a supervisor whose name is Mike

Antonovich. Generally, the Los Angeles County supervisors have been friendly with the Farming Company and went along with the company's planning, which was fine, because our plans were pretty darned good. The last guy--he's a good friend of ours now--was Baxter Ward. But the present guy, Antonovich--I can't figure him. He's starting his third term. He's probably the most stupid man I've ever met.

Ruth N.: He's saying yes to everything. All the dumb--

Newhall: I can't nail him with the money, though. Anyway, he has the power and controls his appointees to the planning commission. He can grant to any builder, not just the Farming Company, the necessary permits to go ahead with a program to build, say, a thousand or two --or five or ten thousand--houses. It's a matter of many millions of dollars.

Riess: Well, whatever we're getting at, I just see what must have been a dilemma for you.

Newhall: It was terrible. I had a vision of building the most beautiful place on earth, and I was not able to get them to do it. But it's a hell of a lot better than a lot of places.

Riess: Where does that vision of building the most beautiful place on earth come from?

Newhall: Well, I love beautiful things. Traveling around the world, you just tend to see--the beauty struck me more than the poverty. The poverty never bothered me that much. People talk about poverty. Well, we're all poor, but look how many beautiful things have been done. Things that are not necessarily needed, but beautiful things.

Riess: It's hard for me to think of your being inspired to build the most beautiful place on earth for people you have called turnips.

Newhall: Well, I thought maybe it could turn the turnips into a higher order of vegetable.

The vision I had now comes back to me. Victor Gruen had been a fugitive from Hitler in Austria. He came over and brought over his friends, and they just started planning. They were good architects and all that. I had a deal. One day while I was visiting with Gruen, I said, "Look. We're going to break this up into little villages. I'm going to go over to Europe. Picasso's still alive. Matisse is still alive. Miro and Salvador Dali are still around. I'm going to go over and make a pitch and have each one of them design a fountain to be the centerpiece of each one of these villages." And Victor said, "I'll go with you." We were going to go and do it, but in the end it just wasn't practical. I mean, I wanted to do something that would make this place memorable. You remember talking about that, Ruth. I still am trying to get the

Farming Company to put in more fountains and pools.

Ruth N.: Scott made books. He made these great big books.

Newhall: I pasted up books and showed them pictures of Hadrian's pool, among other things, Spanish colonial patios, Chinese temples and villages and such. I took the chairman down on visits to Mission Viejo, and Westlake and San Diego, and oh, we went all over. I wanted him to see the best.

I've never talked about this much, because I don't like to. But I'm just disappointed that our company development is sort of upper bourgeois--not so much Christian Dior as Calvin Klein jeans, sort of an upper middle-class line. Some of the homes are so close to next door to their neighbor I think it should be illegal. Now, I'm moaning about what should have been. But what is, is.

Riess: What did you do with Gruen? He laid out the overall plan?

Newhall: He had a big firm.

Riess: Did the Gruen associates get down to the distance between houses, density questions? They must have.

Newhall: Not quite the distance, possibly, but we had all the villages marked out, and there is a dead-end street system so there wouldn't be this great traffic and all that sorrow. But there is a matter of reality and a matter of the available dollar. I'm not trying to criticize the people who did this. We have the best people in the world in charge of our company.

There's one thing you must realize: we, the Newhall Land and Farming Company in this case, had all this "raw" but beautiful land on our books at a cost of almost zero, acres and acres and acres, 40,000. Most of the developers in southern California, except for the Irvine people, and a few like that, have to come in and buy their development land at thousands and or hundreds of thousand dollars an acre before they can begin. There's this basic difference in profit out of it. I think it was our responsibility to do better, and I think we have--on balance.

Ruth N.: It is generally better. Valencia is beautifully landscaped. They have planted thousands of trees.

Newhall: Oh, the landscaping is pretty darned good. I think the San Francisquito Canyon development--it's called Northbridge now--will be beautiful someday.

Riess: Frank Lloyd Wright had something to do with a whole community outside of New York City, one of his Usonian communities. Everyone who lived there was to have been psychoanalyzed before they would be

admitted to it. Would you be interested in planning communities to that extent?

Newhall: No. I used to say to these young planners, "Look. The one problem you guys have got is the problem of personal choice, the problem of individual taste. You can't just stamp out the same thing here--the same house and garage and patio--time after time. You've got to give people a chance to make a choice. There's a question of free will."

They said, "Oh, well, we can program free will into the computer." This is literally what he told me. I gave up, because the beauty of much of these things that I love comes from a certain amount of distinction and personal taste.

Ruth N.: Conflict and diversity. The idea of building a tract of half-a-million-dollar homes boggles my mind, and the people are all, kind of, of an age that move in.

Riess: It's a capital T tract all right.

Newhall: That's right. Your roof has to be the same color. Your house has to be the same color as all the others. You can't paint it. You'll be hauled into court by the homeowners' associations if you do. There are restrictions, covenants covering every house in Valencia.

Ruth N.: You can't leave your pick-up truck parked in the driveway.

Newhall: My response to all that was when Ruth and I moved south we came out here to live in Piru among the orange groves.

Riess: When you came down here, you knew about this house?

Newhall: Oh, I'd known it. I was told it was vacant, that the people had gone or died. One of our young men in the Farming Company came out and rented it, but then he went away to--was it during Korea? No the Vietnam mess.

Ruth N.: He became assistant secretary of the navy under Johnson.

Newhall: He went away, so then we bought the old mansion and fixed it up. That was the great and enjoyable part of our lives.

Riess: So you lived in Berkeley, and you lived here.

Newhall: Basically. And I've lived in San Rafael.

Ruth N.: We were twenty-nine years in the Berkeley house, and we've been here, now, for twenty-one.

The Newhall Boys

[addition dictated by Newhall]

Newhall: By the way, Suzanne, I have talked so long about so many things I simply cannot remember what I have said about our total family participation in so many, many things, particularly in our handling of the Signal. And for the record I would like to make a couple of comments here. The Signal was essentially a joint family effort. I, myself, was certainly very active in its development, but without the real day to day serious leadership and input from Jon and Tony and Ruth, there would have been no lasting Signal in my life.

You see, I bought the Signal in 1963, shortly before John Kennedy was assassinated. But I still continued with the Chronicle full time, or was out steamboating on the Atlantic or running for mayor of San Francisco, until 1972. I was commuting up and down the state between the Chronicle and the Signal for a good bit, but early in the game my son Jon came down to Newhall and at first sold ads, but then became editor and also functioned as publisher. This was a tough period. Newhall was more or less a restless cow town, and Jon found the community hostile and unexciting.

Tony had been away at the Peace Corps in Peru and later at Stanford Business School until about 1968. He and Ruth then came south--we had bought our Victorian home out in Piru by then--and both Tony and Ruth took a more and more active part in the paper. Jon became so bored he finally quit and went north to start his own very successful "alternative" weekly feature news service for college papers and radio stations.

Tony took over as publisher of the Signal, and Ruth became managing editor. I wrote the editorials from the early '70s on. Ruth handled the writing staff and produced the paper. Tony organized the advertising, circulation and printing until we finally all pulled out in mid-1988. While we were there, the Signal was totally a family enterprise, and it was, in the end, very, very successful financially. The Signal was a great experience for all of us.

Skip, my oldest son, who is still with the Jet Propulsion Lab, has always been so busy and so successful in his interplanetary programs and space navigation systems that he never had the time to succumb to the cry of the rogue newspaper. And Tony is, by the way, now working back at the Chronicle--both he and Jon had worked there many years ago as copy boys. Tony is currently assistant to the Chronicle general manager.

[end dictated addition]

XV RUTH NEWHALL, MARRIAGE AND CAREER

Meeting and Marrying Scott##

Riess: [to Ruth] Let's start out with your side of the story of first meeting Scott. Obviously you made an impact.

Ruth N.: I was secretary at the art department, and I took attendance in various classes, particularly at the beginning of the semester after registration, so that I could type up correct enrollments and so forth. Before that class met, Professor Eugen Neuhaus, who was an art professor and a California painter and a German, came into the office, sat down, and said, "Well! That poor Mrs. Newhall from San Rafael, they've lost all their money. She came to see me. I used to go over and give lectures to their garden club.

"She came to see me and brought her son. She's enrolling him here in the art department. There are not many parents who bring their children in, of course, to enroll them, but she has always had all this authority and all this money. Now they've lost it, and she is settling down in Berkeley. Her son, who always expected, I think, to go to some eastern college, is coming here and enrolling in the art department."

I just heard the name and so forth, and so when I took attendance I was interested in seeing who this young man was. The first I remember was his very blue eyes. That was what I saw, and I remembered. He would stop by the office and talk; I had one of those half-doors on the office, and he would stop by and talk.

Riess: You were four years older than he was. Didn't that make you considerably older?

Ruth N.: Yes. I felt considerably older. Yes, much older. At the time, I was twenty-two or thereabouts, and he was eighteen.

We discovered that his mother and my father had known each other when they were very young, when they were both at the age that

we were then. She had dated his roommate for quite a long time. So my parents had them over to dinner, and there were a couple of things like that.

We both signed up, independently, to go on Professor Neuhaus's European tour. Then the bottom fell out of the dollar. That was the Roosevelt year, when he took office and went off the gold standard--devalued the dollar. We no longer had enough money to make the trip. The dollar had suddenly plunged in relation to European currencies, and we had to withdraw from Professor Neuhaus' tour.

However, each of us figured that we could make the trip on our own if we did it on the cheap. I was so much older than he that it didn't occur to anybody that there was any chance of any romance. That was the way it sort of followed--that there was no chance whatsoever, because he was a kid and I was an adult, you see.

Riess: But in fact the two of you were infatuated?

Ruth N.: No, I wasn't at the time. No. It came on, I guess. Close exposure at that age, of course, does things like that, and during the trip the relationship changed. That became apparent to our families when we got back, and my family threw a wing-ding about it. They were absolutely appalled. His mother, on the contrary--

Riess: You mean on moral grounds?

Ruth N.: On moral grounds, and also Scott was unstable. My mother came home with all these stories about what an unstable, unreliable--which was true. He was unstable. But I knew what he was like. As I said to them at the time, "If you think I'm so awfully smart, which you always have said, why do you think I'd be stupid enough not to know what kind of a person this is?" I said, "I know he's got his problems, but I don't think they're all that serious." Well, I was partly wrong, but, on the other hand, I was right. After all, it's been now almost fifty-six years that we've been married. So, in the long run, I was right.

His mother went to Reno with us when we got married.

Riess: His mother must have been <u>very</u> pleased about it all.

Ruth N.: He had been a problem child. He had been <u>very</u> difficult for his parents. I don't know whether it came out in his talking with you, but he was difficult. Nothing evil, just constant trouble, getting kicked out of schools.

His mother kept saying, "I hope you have children just like you are, and you'll know what we've gone through." [laughs] She kept saying that to him. And, of course, we didn't. Our children were

very well-behaved. We had very little trouble with any of them. We didn't have any who turned out to be alcoholic or drug users or getting into any difficulties whatsoever, so we did not "reap the whirlwind," which was interesting. Anyhow, so much for that.

Riess: Was your mother reconciled eventually?

Ruth N.: As soon as she had grandchildren. Scott and I did a lot of traveling for about four years. We started around the world in a boat, as I'm sure you've heard, and did horseback riding in Mexico, and just skated around.

Then we felt it was time to start raising a family. And, of course, the minute a grandchild arrives things become very different. My mother couldn't bear the thought of not seeing her grandchild, so things changed. Relations never were completely normal, I would say, though they were friendly. I had been very close to my mother and my father, and they never got back to that point.

Riess: You were an only child?

Ruth N.: No. I'm the oldest. I have a brother and a sister, both younger than I, both of whom are still alive and flourishing.

Riess: When you married Scott, did you have that feeling that you were moving into this huge Newhall dynasty?

Ruth N.: No. That was no part of it at all. And, of course, we had eloped. The first hint I had was when we went to Thanksgiving dinner up in Hopland, on Scotty's mother's side of the family. All these people were there, and I began to see what a huge and close family he came from. But that had not been part of the picture. His mother had moved to Berkeley with the children, and both of us were in school, and we spent the summer in Europe so I had never had, really, any opportunity or dealt with the family at all. This was a surprise to me.

Riess: He was a "catch," wasn't he?

Ruth N.: Well, I guess, except they were so broke then. I liked his educational background and his absolutely continuing intellectual curiosity and his appreciation for art. He had all these attributes of things we liked to do together, and things we enjoyed. You don't often find that among young men. And that was what really made me sure that he was the kind of person I wanted to be around.

Riess: And, in fact, did you start dreaming and scheming and cooking things up, at that point, that you would like to do together? Did you have a life plan at all?

Ruth N.: Well, at the time, when we were first married, what we both wanted to do was more traveling, and I was appalled when he got the idea of buying a boat and starting around the world, because I had never been on a boat, really. But he said, "Oh, you can learn navigation easily," and he was right. It's not all that difficult. I was terribly seasick going out the Golden Gate the first time, but I got over that and was never seasick again. We went to Mexico on another trip, and we enjoyed that.

Scott's Self-Confidence

Riess: But beyond that--I mean, you certainly had been geared up by your family and by your education to be something, and so what was your sense of your own future?

Ruth N.: Oh, one thing. Before we got married I said, "I have no intention whatsoever of settling down and being a housewife, so forget it."

And he said, "I promise you that I will keep you working as long as we are married." So I said, "Okay, that's a promise." And he has.

He said, "I will always have someone working in the house to help with the house," and he has. "And there will always be a way for you to get out, because you don't belong in the house either."

It's not that I don't enjoy cooking and housework. I do, but I don't like it to be my only activity. So he was very, very supportive right from the very beginning.

Riess: Well, he sounds like he was very self-confident. He knew that he was a man who would be in that position to be supportive.

Ruth N.: Well, he predicted. I said, "You know, we're going to have to live on my salary while you're in school." His mother gave him $50 a month, which was then more than it sounds like. I was earning $100 a month at the University. On that $150 we could save. We saved enough to make our trips, and that was really extraordinary. But it was a different dollar and a different time. I said, "You know, you can't live on my salary forever."

He said, "No, I promise you that by the time I'm twenty-five, I will be earning ten thousand dollars a year, and I promise that by the time I am thirty-five, I will have the income of a millionaire."

He had no idea how he was going to do it. He was just very self-confident. And I like self-confidence. I think it's a very good trait.

Riess: It feeds itself.

Ruth N.: Yes. That's right.

Riess: So, in fact, he actually got through Cal.

Ruth N.: No, he did not. He quit at the end of his junior year. We had been married, then, about a year and a half. Henry Hart, who owned an Oriental art store in San Francisco--and whose best customer was Albert Bender--taught a course in Oriental art on the campus. I was his reader; I read his examination papers. He said, "Why don't you come and learn some of the practical side? My assistant in the store is going to be gone this summer. I will hire you to come in and work in the store, and you can learn a little bit about the retail business and about Chinese art, and it'll be a whole new field for you." So I said, "Fine, I'd like to do that."

Well, Scotty was appalled. That was leaving him hanging out to dry. Meanwhile, however, he had bought a very small camera. Candid photography had just come in, "candid" meaning snapping it when it wasn't posed. Up until then they had always posed everybody, because the film speed and the lens speeds had not been great enough to be able to catch casual photographs. So he bought this small camera and he had been snapping pictures around the campus, and he said, "I will try to be a newspaper photographer then. I'll go down to the Examiner and see if they will hire me," because he knew some staff member down there or something.

He went to the Examiner. They didn't need anybody, so he went over to the Chronicle. He happened to hit the Chronicle exactly as some photographer had quit, and they were desperately in need of a new photographer. (This is the way people get jobs. It's accidental, usually.) He telephoned me and talked in whispers. I remember the whisper. I was in the office of the store, and he telephoned.

He said, [whispering] "I've got a job in the Chronicle, and it's going to pay me a hundred dollars a month! But I have to--I'll come up."

I said, "Yes. Come on up." He came bursting into Henry Hart's store. It was a Friday, and I was standing up in the balcony above. He said, ignoring everybody, "I've got the job, but I have to develop my own pictures, and I haven't any idea how to do it." A little man who was down below said, "What pictures are you going to develop, young man?" Henry Hart led this man out and introduced him to Scotty, and he said, "This is Albert Bender."

Albert said, "Scott Newhall? Oh, I know your father." And Scotty said, "Yeah, and I've seen a lot of your work at the University," and so forth.

He said, "Well, young man, you stay right here. You just don't move. Just stay right here, and I'll be back." In about, oh, twenty minutes, he came staggering back. He had been up to Newbegin's, and he had about eight to ten books: How to Develop a Picture; Photography, by Ansel Adams; How to do Your Own Darkroom Work, and all these things.

Scotty sat down and did all these formulas. He wrote them down, put them in little slips in his pocket. After his first morning at work he called me, again whispering on the phone, and said, "I took a picture and it came out." [laughter]

That was beginning of his newspaper career. That was the first day.

Riess: And he really absorbed that. I mean, he was a quick learner, obviously. It wasn't just luck at this point.

Ruth N.: Yes. Oh, yes. He became very settled. He decided to walk away from it after he had got beaten up in a fight by somebody who didn't want his picture taken.

Riess: Did you think that was the beginning of a life in newspapers, or was that just a job?

Ruth N.: No. He had gone into the newspaper business because he was afraid --we talked about this--he was afraid to approach strangers. He was very diffident. He never wanted to admit ignorance, I think. He wouldn't ask a bus driver where to get off. While we were overseas, even though he could speak German better than I could, I would have to ask the policeman which was the way to someplace. I've never minded going up to perfect strangers and asking questions or talking to them. He did.

He said, "You know, the newspaper business would get me over that. I'd have to. That would cure me of my shyness." And he said, "Well, the nice thing about the newspaper business is you get into all different kinds of environments. It gives you an overlook on society, and you can decide where you want to land."

Riess: At the same time, you're one step removed, because you are behind your camera.

Ruth N.: That's right. Yes, or you're a reporter. No matter what your function is, you get into all kinds of things, and you can ask questions.

He said, "Then I'll make up my mind. I'll do this for the summer, and then I'll go back to school." When the fall came, they raised his salary. He liked the work so much, it just seemed like a good idea to stay on, and so he didn't go back to school.

Ruth on the Chronicle Staff: Herb Caen and Carolyn Anspacher

Riess: What was your impression of the importance of family to him? Did he want to have children?

Ruth N.: Eventually. I think we felt it about equally. I began to get restive. Of course, I was older than he. When I began to see my late twenties approaching, I think when I was twenty-seven--. No. We got back from the trip, he lost his leg, and that summer the Kleebergers loaned us their house out in north Berkeley--it was a lovely house--for Scotty to recuperate. They were up at the camp. We stayed in the Kleebergers' house for about six weeks while he recuperated. It was there we decided--.

I was very cautious. I said, "You know, you don't have a job." He said, "Yes, I'll have a job." He said, "It will take nine months before I can get off crutches and get a wooden leg, and we might as well start, because we can't go anywhere. We've got to stay home."

It turned out to be a very good time to have a baby. Our oldest son was born in '38, and the war in Europe started that fall. We couldn't go anywhere, really, and we couldn't go back to Europe, which is what we had thought of doing. It turned out to be a very good time for a family.

Riess: Was the loss of the leg a psychic setback at all? It doesn't appear to have been.

Ruth N.: No. It was a shock. I mean, he was a very good tennis player, and it cut right out those vigorous active sports and things, but, as he said, there's a lot else to do. He was on crutches for a year. He couldn't put a leg on for a whole year.

During that year he went back to the Chronicle. We had got to know Paul Smith very well--as a matter of fact he had come the first leg of our voyage in our boat with us, we were very close friends--and he got Scotty back working in the library, sitting mostly.

Riess: He had gotten to know him when he was a newspaper photographer?

Ruth N.: Yes. We had become very good friends right away when Scott started working. We had good friends there at the Chronicle, and he enjoyed it. He just liked the Chronicle, and we had a lot of fun.

I said, you know, now that we had a family, I needed to work. I wasn't going to stay home any longer. My mother-in-law had given us the services of a West Indian woman who came in and helped out during the first weeks I was home with the baby. I just decided to keep her on. I could hire her for about half my salary, and she stayed for fifteen years, through four children. She stayed on

until she got too old.

Riess: So your first job was with the Chronicle?

Ruth N.: Yes. I went out to an employment agency, because I had taken secretarial work when I was ten years old, and I could do shorthand and things.

Riess: When you were ten years old?

Ruth N.: Yes. I stayed out of school a year because I was too young, my mother thought, for my class. I took shorthand and French that year, and shorthand, when you learn it at that age stays with you. So I warmed up a little bit on it, I had to do a little practice thing.

Then I happened to mention to Paul that I was looking for a job. I said, "Well, I've been out job-hunting, and I don't like much." He said, "What do you do?" I said, "Well, I can do shorthand." And he said, "Well, we desperately need an editorial secretary. Our secretary's just quit. Why don't you come in and do that?" So I said, "Fine. I will come and do that."

There weren't as many openings for women then on newspapers. Of course, now it's totally open. I mean, I think there are more women than men in most city rooms.

Riess: What did the editorial secretary do?

Ruth N.: Secretary to everybody--I mean, anybody who had letters to do, principally the managing editor and the editor. Chester Rowell had his own secretary part-time, but when she was gone I would work for him too, and for the managing editor, and for Paul.

After I had been there about four or five months, they hired this young man called Herb Caen to do their radio column, and they needed somebody to handle his letters because he got a lot, and do the radio log. So they moved me into that. I still did letters for the managing editor, but I sat in Herb's office. He was nineteen years old at the time, and I was about twenty-seven or thereabouts. When he came to work I was already pregnant and was going to quit in a few months. When I quit, Paul took him off the job and said, "Go away for a month, and when you come back we're going to have you do a general column, not the radio column anymore."

The day we were leaving, he came in and told me. He said, "I'm supposed to have twenty to twenty-five items a day. How do you like that?"

Riess: Isn't that incredible? He was only nineteen.

Ruth N.: Yes, when they hired him.

Riess: Did they recognize that he had this gift?

Ruth N.: Oh, he had been working in Sacramento, doing an awfully good radio column there.

Riess: What's a radio column?

Ruth N.: Oh, just like Terrence O'Flaherty did on television. Television didn't exist then. You wrote about radio personalities and programs. Are you familiar with Terry O'Flaherty's thing? It was that.

Riess: But he hadn't finished school?

Ruth N.: Hadn't got to college.

Riess: I didn't realize that about him.

Ruth N.: Yeah. He was just very brilliant, and he was an awfully good ball player. He was a semipro--almost went into baseball. His sister was quite a good musician, so he was very musically oriented, too. He knew a lot about a lot of things for a young man, and he just had this gift of being a writer.

I really enjoyed that work. Then I quit to have the baby--. Yes. That's right. It was before the baby was born that I went to work at the Chronicle, when we got back from the trip. After Scotty had his amputation, I went in as a secretary, then became pregnant, then took two months' pregnancy leave, came back, and then I did book reviews for Joseph Henry Jackson.

Every now and then they'd have stories they needed writing, so they'd pass them on to me, and I suddenly realized the way to get a job was to be there when a job opened up and to have done some writing and show them you can do it. That's the way most women then got into the business. Men got in as coming in as copyboys. Generally speaking, they were hired on--Art Hoppe was hired on as a copyboy, and a lot of people were just hired. That was where they had their beginning. Women would start as secretaries, men as copyboys. Then, if they showed diligence and began to write and things, then when they needed someone there was somebody ready. It suddenly occurred to me that that was the way to get into the writing business, which I did.

Riess: Was there someone in particular who recognized you? Was it Paul Smith, you would say, who really saw that you had the potential?

Ruth N.: Actually, I was hired for my first writing job by Bill Richardson, who was then editor of This World, a weekly news magazine. He had

asked me to do some writing. Scotty was working for him then. When they would need things done in a hurry, they'd hire me, and then when they needed another staff member, he asked if he could hire me. I remember I recommended somebody else to take my job, and that was the way we sort of passed things on.

Riess: Were there any other women on the paper?

Ruth N.: Yes, Carolyn Anspacher was there.

Riess: Tell me about her. What was she like?

Ruth N.: Carolyn was the queen bee. She was a somewhat tall, dark person, with angular features. She was bright, determined, emotional, and a resourceful reporter. She was what was called in earlier times a "sob sister," which meant that she was usually assigned to highly colorful stories. The one I remember best is the kidnaping of two-year-old Marc de Tristan, son of Count Marc de Tristan and his wife Jane [Christensen], who was the best friend of Mrs. Charles Thieriot.

They were very rich, very prominent Burlingame people, and when little Marc was snatched from his nanny while out for a walk in Burlingame, it became the story of the century. All the press and wire services set up shop in a Burlingame garage about a block from the home of the stricken family, who surrounded themselves with guards. Carolyn was there, day and night, sleeping on a cot. All the reporters watched each other like hawks.

Well, one day, late afternoon, a call came to the Chronicle city desk from the owner of a tiny rural store up in the Siskiyous, saying that local lumberjacks had found the kidnapper and the little boy driving on a remote lumber trail, and had brought them in and were waiting for the sheriff. Little Marc (this was after three or four days) was unhurt. Well! Talk about scoops!

The city editor Abe Mellinkoff, first made sure this was the only phone within ten miles, and then got various reporters to keep the lady storekeeper on the line so nobody else could be notified. He then called Carolyn at her Burlingame garage station and said, "Stay calm and don't say a word. Little Marc has been found. He's fine. I want you to get up to the de Tristan house and tell them. Now."

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Ruth N.: Carolyn didn't turn a hair. As all the other reporters looked on idly she said, "Yes, Grandma. Okay. Well, I'm so busy I don't know that I'll have time to get the stockings." She kept talking this nonsense while he told her the circumstances of how the baby had been found. And she said, "All right, all right. Nothing's going

on. I'll go out now." And so she got up and left and, of course, went out and doubled back to the Tristan house and was able to walk in and tell the parents that the child was safe and well.

Riess: What a scoop! What other papers would have been there? The Examiner and the Call, and--

Ruth N.: The Examiner, the News, and the Call, and the Tribune, and the AP and the UPI. Everybody. It was a big story, because this was an extremely wealthy and prominent family.

Riess: When you looked over the scene at the Chronicle, what job would you have liked? Would you like to have been editor? How high did you aim?

Ruth N.: I wasn't particularly ambitious. I had too much to do, raising a family. I was in and out of the Chronicle for a number of years. They said I had the thickest employment folder of anybody, because every year I would take maybe a month or two off while the children were on vacation, or to clean house and get things in order, and then I'd go back to work. I could not work absolutely steadily, and then when I did finally quit, I worked in the opposite direction. I would go in on vacation relief when people were gone. When the editorial writers were gone, I would go in and write editorials. I worked everywhere but society. I refused to work on the society page.

Riess: Why?

Ruth N.: It seemed trivial to me. I don't know. I just had no interest at all--none. I didn't want to spend my life going around to parties and things like that.

I loved reporting the United Nations conference. I loved going to Mexico City and reporting on the conference there. I liked reporting the Berkeley campus. That was a very stirring time to be reporting it, but I just enjoyed it, because I liked the people and I liked the contacts, and I had a good time. I liked the other reporters in the pressroom. I was not trying to be queen of the May, I just was doing a job I very much enjoyed.

Riess: I thought there was a man running the society page.

Ruth N.: While I was there it was Mildred Brown Robbins. She was a lovely person. Is, I should say. I think she's still around. She's three or four years older than I, but not much. Later, Frances Moffatt came in from the Examiner, and she was excellent. She was there while Scott was there; she was there, basically, after I left.

Riess: When did you leave?

Ruth N.: In 1952, when Scott became executive editor.

Newhall Children

Riess: When you were on the paper, then, it was because you wanted to work and be busy, not that you had a career mind?

Ruth N. No, I didn't. My career goals were more or less--I wanted to be doing something I enjoyed, but I figured that the career, if there was going to be a career, was Scott's and the childrens'. I mean, they were the ones we had to worry about. Scott always had a lot of hobbies, and we were always terribly busy with those, and very busy with four children. The four children were all within five years, and so that really kept us jumping. Taking them on vacations--it all took a lot of planning, a lot of careful planning, to occupy their vacation time and everything. I mean, we took them to Tahoe. We took them on long trips in these vehicles that Scott built up. We visited every national park and monument in the West.

Riess: This is the vistadome on a four-wheel drive army ambulance?

Ruth N.: Yes. We went overland through the entire western America and taught the children to read maps and feel at home and always be oriented with where they were. It was very valuable that way. And taught them to drive. They all learned to drive when they were about ten, because out in the desert they can learn how to manipulate a gearshift and all that sort of thing, which is more difficult on city streets. We had a lot of fun with them.

Riess: Could you give a brief history of your children at this point? The first one was Skip. Nicholas is what his--

Ruth N.: He changed his name to XX. Don't ask me why. I don't understand why he does anything. But he's called Skip universally, and lists himself in the phone book as Skip. We called him that because Paul Smith called Scotty "Skipper" from our days on the boat, and then he began to call Skip "the little Skipper." We all began to pick that up, and we finally just began calling him Skip. That is his name. That's what people call him, all other reports to the contrary.

Riess: The only reason I said Nicholas is because I looked at the portrait up there on the wall, and it's signed Nicholas.

Ruth N.: Oh, yes. That was originally. That was my grandfather's name, and I thought it was kind of a nice name, but he never liked it, so I said, "Well, drop it. Whatever."

Riess: And he started out in Berkeley schools and then went off to--

Ruth N.: Middlesex, then to Stanford, then got his Ph.D. at Cal Tech, and has worked for Jet Propulsion ever since. He's still at Jet Propulsion

Lab. He's got his Ph.D. in math and astronomy, the combination.

Riess: And he always had an interest in math?

Ruth N.: All the children did. Yes.

Riess: And Tony and Jon--Anthony and Jonathan--were the next?

Ruth N.: That's right. They were twins.

Riess: Were there any other twins in your family?

Ruth N.: My mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother were twins. The doctor denied it was happening, but it did. [laughter] Yes. This is definitely--of course, these are all fraternal twins. That's the kind that comes down through the mother's line, so they're not alike at all. I mean, they're brothers, but they have very little other resemblance.

They all went to Stanford. Jon went to Cate in Santa Barbara because he had had polio and had a lot of corrective operations on one of his legs, which had also been injured by--he was chewed up by a dog when he was two-and-a-half. He had operations between the years of thirteen and fifteen--they wanted to wait until he was adolescent to do it--and we wanted him close to home so he could come up to the doctor's and be nearby. He was the one who went to Cate, and Tony went back to Middlesex, where Skip was.

Riess: How did you decide on Middlesex, of all the eastern schools?

Ruth N.: Because of the scholarship. The people at Garfield School in Berkeley had told me about the scholarships that they offered. You take tests, and you didn't have to be, as you did in most places, broke to get a scholarship. They would estimate about how much you would have to pay. They would give a full scholarship. We couldn't afford to pay at the time. We had no money, and we paid a little bit, but it was deductible. You see, it was a donation then. I know there were several families there that had their children on full scholarships, who had paid the full amount, but they became donations and therefore deductible.

But they had this scholarship program that was very good, and it was a good school. I felt they learned an awful lot. I know, when we first sent them there all of our friends said, "How could you bear to do that? How <u>can</u> you send them away?" And then the following year they called up and said,"Do you think it's too late for me to get Steve into there?" [chuckles]

We sent them away when they were fourteen. Of course, by the time they were fifteen to sixteen their parents were wondering what monsters they had spawned, you know. On the other hand, our

children, because they were so glad to get home and "out of jail," as they put it, were always very nice to us. We never had any problems at all with their not being nice. They always treated us with the greatest friendship.

Riess: Jon has been described as physically and mentally resembling Scott and having the same sense of mission.

Ruth N.: Jon's very much like Scott, yes. I'm not sure he looks like him, but he's very much like him temperamentally. Tony is more like me, people tell us that. I can see it also. He's more relaxed, not as driven. Jon was always the one that was stirring things up. Tony was the one that was straightening things out. It was sort of their different characters. They're born with them.

Riess: Both of them have been on the Signal with you.

Ruth N.: They both have been, yeah, and Jon's now in computers. Tony's real love is computers. The one thing he's worried about, moving north, is his whole computer setup. They all love computers and math, and they are very much oriented in that direction, though they also are very fond of the newspaper business.

Jon started his own news service after he left the Signal. He started a sort of--what do you call it? An avant-garde or some kind of a strange little news service that carried a lot of protest stories and things. It was during the Vietnam War and during the sixties. He was very militant about it and very much caught up in the thing. He started it that way.

After the war ended, and that decade sort of ended, his news service just got into running oddball and funny stories, and he didn't enjoy it so much. He decided to sell it. He sold it. It was very profitable. He sold it for a very good price and didn't have to work for about four years. He stayed home, studied computers, did a little writing, invented some programs, did all the cooking while his wife went to work for first the Chronicle and then the Oakland Tribune. When they had children they moved to Oakland, to Montclair. She's still a columnist at the Tribune as you may know.

Riess: No, I don't. What's her name?

Ruth N.: Barbara Falconer Newhall. She does a Sunday column for the Tribune and some other things, too. But basically she does the Sunday column. During all the time, still Jon did all the cooking, which amazed me. Jon used to come home from Stanford and say, "Mom, will you warm up a little milk for me? I always burn it." Well, then, all of a sudden he's making all these strange things. You know, he's making lasagna and cooking the Thanksgiving dinner and doing all these things that he's discovered he likes to do. He does the

shopping and the cooking, and Barbara looks after keeping the house clean, and it works to be a very good division of labor. It's very handy, though he's back at work now, so it's changing.

Riess: You had a daughter?

Ruth N.: Yes, and she was killed. She was two years younger than the twins. It was like having triplets, because girls develop faster than boys. So by the time she was about four, they were virtually the same age. Skip was sort of the outsider. These three were very close to each other.

She was killed in a very freak accident, a week before Christmas, when she was twelve. She was out singing Christmas carols with a bunch of friends, and it had been raining. La Loma used to come straight down the hill into LeRoy and do a sharp turn. They were out in front of a house on LeRoy, where we had some friends, and this tow truck came down the hill, lost its brakes. He had parked it on the hill. It was empty; the man wasn't in it. It went down the hill, and the children all scattered. It hit her. They all went in different directions, and she was the one that got hit and killed right away.

Riess: What was her name?

Ruth N.: Penny. Penelope--Penny. That was a blow.

Riess: What year was that?

Ruth N.: That was '55. Let's see, she was born in '43. The twins were born in '41. Skip was born in '38.

Behind the Scenes

Riess: I was wondering about these promotions Scott cooked up. Are you behind any of them?

Ruth N.: No, I wasn't behind. I was the helper. Scotty's the creator. I was the helper. I wrote the clues on the treasure hunt, I did things like that, or the rhymes on various occasions, or parodies of songs. In other words, I would help with the execution of the ideas, but I didn't dream them up. No, I'm not that creative. Scott's the creator. I do the dull work. I've written clues for more treasure hunts than I can describe, both up in San Francisco and for the Signal. I've done them both. As I said, I'm really not the creative type. Scotty is.

Riess: You reiterate that.

Ruth N.: Well, we've sort of worked as a team.

Riess: Did you ever feel trapped?

Ruth N.: No. Never. There's always something doing. When Scott went through his psychiatric treatment, and when he left the psychiatrist, the psychiatrist called me and he said, "I can guarantee you one thing. Your life may not be smooth, but you'll never be bored." And he was right. He was absolutely right. I've never been bored.

Riess: How do you feel about the women's movement? Are you a feminist of some stripe, and have you written about it and talked about it?

Ruth N.: Moderate. There are a lot of things about the feminist movement I don't like. But, on the other hand, I feel strongly about equal pay for equal work, which has generally been true in the newspaper business. The only thing that was missing up till very recent years in the newspaper business was the accessibility of top jobs--promotability, you might say. I could see a certain amount of sense in that among young women who were raising their families, because with my own experience, a family has to consume a certain amount of time. If you are through with raising your family, then there should be no limit on you. But, if you've got a young family, it seems to me you're not going to be 100 percent for your job.

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Ruth N.: Scott, for example: when his job got pressuring, he would get in at work around nine-thirty to ten in the morning. He wouldn't get home until ten o'clock at night. I mean, he was working a ten-hour day, at least. A lot of it would be just consumed with talking to Charlie, but no matter what, I could not, at that state in my life, have worked those hours. I had to be with the children.

I think it was very good for the children to have me working. As a matter of fact, when I gave up being a police reporter, they all burst out crying. They just hated to see me give that up. They loved that. They liked me to work. But there would be times--you know, during the summer you can't abandon them. I would carefully arrange all these many programs for them, but I had to be home at certain times.

Riess: What we call "quality time."

Ruth N.: That's right. When they're little, you can leave them with caretakers much more readily than you can when they come to a stage over eight years old when they can wander around. You can't say, "You can't leave the house." You sort of have to be there. There is a period, sort of between eight and sixteen, where you have to be

there a good deal, at least certain hours. That's why I loved the police reporting. It was because it was in Berkeley, and I could get home in about five minutes. I could check on them all the time, or they could come by the police station. That worked out beautifully--a job at which you can keep your finger on them.

Riess: So you had the police beat for Berkeley, and then you also covered the University?

Ruth N.: Yes. I covered Berkeley. Let's put it that way. The police was a little part, and that's where the pressure was. The University furnished the major news stories, and I'd spend a good part of every day up there, wandering around, talking to people and so forth.

Riess: We were talking yesterday about news management and the loyalty oath, basically talking about the loyalty oath. Do you remember some of the people that you dealt with most in that? I know George Stewart wrote a book about it.

Ruth N.: Malcolm Davisson, Earl Warren, John Francis Neylan, Robert Gordon Sproul were the ones that I chiefly remember. I saw a lot of Malcolm during that time.

Riess: These were the people that you would call to find out what they were saying today about all these things?

Ruth N.: Malcolm was chairman, I believe, of the faculty committee. He was a professor of economics, and he was chairman of the Department of Economics. He was one of the protesters. He was a very balanced, mild--he was not one of the crazies, as we call them. He was a non-signer, and he sort of led the Academic Senate's formal stand against signing the loyalty oath.

I learned a lot in that. We were at a cocktail party one day, and some general walked up and said, "What is this all going on over in Berkeley?" Somebody who was on the other side said, "Oh, a bunch of crazies won't say that they're not communists." Well, that's so easy to put it that way, but--.

Vietnam Years

Riess: How did you all get along through the Vietnam period? Were sympathies divided?

Ruth N.: No. We were all frantically opposed to the Vietnam War. We felt that the government had let its people down. They were lying to us, obviously. I did a great deal of historic reading. Scotty turned to me when Mrs. Nhu, who was Diem's sister-in-law, came over with

her beautiful daughter. Scotty said, "Who are these people and what's going on over there? Why are all these Buddhist monks burning themselves in the public square?" I got all these books out, and I went into them very thoroughly, and I did a precis. I said "It was as you've suspected. Things are being screwed up. History is being distorted."

Nobody mentioned publicly, you know, that Ho Chi Minh had been promised by President Truman that Truman would support his independence if he organized guerrillas against the Japanese during the war--which he did. I mean, he had done it all, and then he wrote these letters to Truman saying, "Okay. I did my part. How about you?" In return, the American government supported the turning over of Vietnam to the French. The Vietnamese had been betrayed by us, and it was a real betrayal. Then, as the war went on, it was quite obvious that our government was lying to its people and I felt frantic about it. I really did. I felt like I did during the McCarthy period.

Riess: When you feel frantic about something, in a way a newspaper is a good outlet, but that can make you even more frantic, because you write and write and write, but it doesn't do anything.

Ruth N.: It does in the long run. We were the first paper to speak out, the Chronicle was, against Vietnam. I was not on the Chronicle then, but I was marching. Scotty and I would have long talks about it. I marched from the Ferry Building to the beach. The kids felt very militant about it.

That feeling finally spread so that all the respectable people, like the New York Times and so forth, finally picked up on it. So it adds up, and it was the same way as the McCarthy thing. I had felt frantic there, thinking democracy is going down the tubes, you know; this insane slander of all the nice people I know is killing the country. But eventually, just at the brink, sanity takes hold.

Riess: Is there any other way that you tried to use the power of words?

Ruth N.: I made a great point of marching in my newest Magnin's suit, so I didn't look disreputable. There were a bunch of people who were doing that. I know one of the women sidled over to me, and she said, "I see you have the same idea I do." [laughs]

Riess: After you had done all that background work, you might have written an article for wider distribution.

Ruth N.: No. When it's not a popular viewpoint--

Riess: You just can't get it printed?

Ruth N.: Well, they will print it, but it's like these things on the Op/Ed

page, one person's opinion, and it doesn't make any difference. It's only when it gradually becomes the majority viewpoint--. You just--. It's like little drops of water, you know, you just keep hammering at it from your little corner, wherever it is, and eventually it works.

I'm much more a believer that things can be accomplished eventually, that the country can be saved if enough people have it in mind. And when I say "saved," all I mean is that no wild people from either side of the political spectrum be allowed to run away with it. It's getting very, very difficult, with the drugs and everything else, to make sense out of this country.

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XVI AN INTERVIEW ON A TYPICAL DAY--FEBRUARY 25, 1967

[Introductory note by Scott Newhall: This tape was made on February 25, 1967. The interviewer was my wife, Ruth Newhall. She had made a series of tape interviews with me which were in storage in our home in Piru in southern California. Our home burned to the ground in February 1982, but for some reason or other this single tape survived and is herewith included.

By way of background, on this day, February 25, 1967, the biggest rumpus around San Francisco was the ongoing environmental debate over whether or not the Rockefeller people, and their project architect John Portman, should be permitted to proceed with their plans for the Embarcadero Center development at the foot of Market Street. Also, although the topic covered herein is described as a typical day in the Chronicle editor's office, on this particular occasion Charles Thieriot, the Chronicle's publisher, happened to be out of town. On almost all really typical days, Charlie and I would spend a good deal of time together.]

Ruth: Why don't you just sort of review a couple of typical days. You've had a lot of things going on I know, so--.

Scott: Well, it just occurred to me, if anyone wants an idea of how things sort of operate around Chronicle at the moment, what's been going on the last day or two, if I went through the day from a narrative standpoint, it might be fairly illuminating. Let's take Thursday. I had a lot of stuff going on Thursday. Let's see, there was to be a meeting of the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation of which I am

president, a special meeting to make some technical changes in the articles of incorporation. It had to do with our tax situation, somewhat.

Ruth: The meeting was at 10:30 in the morning at the Standard Oil Building?

Scott: At 10:30 in the morning at Atholl McBean's office up on the 17th floor.

After getting out of bed, groaning and creaking in more or less every joint, getting myself pulled together, I got up there. I made it with about thirty seconds to spare because the traffic was really quite heavy and Market Street is now in the process of being cut up, you know, for the removal, or rather, relocation of utilities for this ridiculous BART transit system and so on. And--let's see, I'm talking about Thursday--.

Ruth: You have been under somewhat of a strain in your relations with Atholl McBean.

Scott: Oh yeah. He gets mad at people and it's sort of my turn for being mad at. But that was neither here nor there. The main thing was I wanted to resign as president of the Foundation because my cousin Janie, who's Miss Jane Newhall, who's a very good friend of mine, is a perfect person for the job and, oh, we'll talk about that later.

Our session in Atholl's office was just a family conference, the Foundation meeting, and I had to be there. Atholl is getting on in years. He is now around eighty-eight. I think he just had his eighty-eighth birthday. Anyway, we met and made the necessary changes, got young Scottie as treasurer, and so on.

Ruth: "Scottie" being Walter Scott Newhall, your cousin?

Scott: Right. And so I attended this meeting at Atholl's office and afterward got a cab and got back up to the Chronicle, around 11:30 or so. Let's see, then I had to get hold of Phil Burton, who is our congressman--kind of an active Democrat, liberal congressman for San Francisco--because I had been mixed up in a hell of a fight on a Job Corps situation down in Newhall, and--.

Ruth: The fight is the local community opposing a Job Corps facility in the Newhall area.

Scott: Well, the ladies down there have raised a protest. The men don't care particularly what the Job Corps situation is. But the Job Corps agency wants to bring six hundred girls to a barracks out near Saugus to train them to be, you know, nurses aides and, oh, airline counter girls and things like that. In other words, you know, low skill or some semi-skilled things.

There has been a very, very vicious battle in the columns of the Signal covering this case. We have been absolutely strong for the establishment of the Job Corps girls' center. It would be set up in a barracks where they used to have fifteen hundred sort of overflow Los Angeles drunks drying out. The county leased the area from the City of Los Angeles for a rehabilitation center.

Ruth: They call it, locally, The Drunk Farm.

Scott: Right.

Ruth: Very beautiful site.

Scott: It's a nice place, and it's a good place for these girls. And I don't think that they are going to corrupt the morals of good, old Saugus or Newhall or canyon country.

Ruth: They'll have a hard time.

Scott: Yeah, they're all having a hard time fighting it out down there. Anyway, all these fat babes out of Oklahoma are fighting it, to keep the girls out of Saugus, so I've got to do a little phoning here and there. As a matter of a fact, I've spent an awful lot of hours on this matter and it's still a very bitter fight--oh man, it's bitter. I don't want to go into the intricate angles of it, except that I had to get a hold of Phil, who's a pretty good friend of mine--I've known him for years--and get him to get some pressure on the Job Corps not to back off in the face of the Newhall-Saugus community.

Ruth: It offers economic opportunity.

Scott: That's right, not to back off in the face of the local antagonism. Because this [location] is only one of three possibilities I'm trying to convince these guys in Washington that it's more important than ever that they select the Newhall area site for the Job Corps. If they don't it will be taken as an indication by these Birch Ladies that--by 'Birch Ladies' I mean they're far right conservative--.

Ruth: They would think they'd won.

Scott: Yeah. Morons from the Middle West, you know, that they would think that they'd won. And so we just have to give them a licking on the matter. So I got hold of Phil and talked to him about it.

Then he spent quite a lot of time talking about who we are going to back, who the Chronicle is going to back for mayor in San Francisco in this forthcoming election this year. You know McAteer, Senator Eugene McAteer, state senator for San Francisco, is going to run. He was a big Cal football player. And Jack Shelley is going

to run again, and they're both Democrats. Jack, of course, is a former labor skate--a San Francisco Irishman, head of the Bakery Wagon Driver's Union, you know. Now he's an older man.

Ruth: And was a congressman for many years.

Scott: Many years a congressman. Phil Burton took his seat. I am wandering around about this because this was a long conversation on the phone with Phil on this. It was on all these topics.

Vice-President Hubert Humphrey was out, you know, last weekend, and invited two or three of us from the paper to come to a dinner. He had a dinner for twelve or thirteen people. I couldn't go, so he very kindly phoned. I was embarrased, as a matter of fact, when he phoned. I jumped to my feet and said, "Well, Mr. Vice President, I'm standing at attention, in honor and respect for the man, not particularly the office." I think I also said there is only one job tougher in the United States than being President, and that is being Vice President, particularly right now.

Anyway, Humphrey called. I had met him before, and Phil is kind of close to him, and I told him a little about the Job Corps battle and told him not to lose heart in having to represent an administration with which he might not be in complete intellectual accord. He's really had a tough job--I am very sympathetic there. And I talked to Phil that time--I'm jumping back a couple of days to an earlier conversation--.

Ruth: It was on Tuesday you talked to them, wasn't it?

Scott: I think it was on Tuesday, yeah. And then I said okay, and told Humphrey I was going to call Phil and give him a fill-in on it.

Ruth: Was Phil in San Francisco or Washington?

Scott: He was in San Francisco. He came out from Washington, you see, with the Vice President. The Vice President was out here to make an address at Stanford, among other things, where they had a pretty bad time from the students. I personally admire Mr. Humphrey, because he is a bright guy. I mean he is not like this Johnson, you know, completely sort of a Reagan-illiterate-citizen-politician, or whatever the hell they are. Although Johnson, I will admit, is at least a pro; he knows how to screw up in a professional manner.

Anyway, getting back to my day, then I got on the phone with Phil for a while, talked to him--.

Ruth: And you were talking about who you were going to support.

Scott: Who the Chronicle was going to support. And I said, "Well, I can tell you this, I don't know. I think Shelley probably is the only

man who could win, that's my own personal feeling." You see, the decision will eventually not reside in me.

I talked to Jack about this the other day and I said, "Now look, if you want some help, I'll write some speeches for you, four or five speeches for you." He got pretty hot about it. I told him, "If you go along a certain line you're going to get a fair shake anyway from the Chronicle, as far as news is concerned."

And because McAteer is, frankly, a savage, as far as politics goes--I won't say a crook, but just a typical opportunistic, absolute skull. He's handling his campaign--. You know how these fellows running for office have these little pamphlets or brochures, or whatever, with pictures in them? Well, McAteer's got a picture of himself blocking a punt in one of the Cal games. He was I think an All-American or something, football player for Cal, and I'm afraid the punt hit him in the head when he blocked it, but at least he did block it.

And then he has pictures of him as a big game hunter, with kind of a three day beard on him, standing up with a rifle, and his foot on the carcass of some poor dead animal that didn't wish him any harm at all and actually wasn't planning to take away his football or anything else. Now you may be fascinated to know that what's going to kill McAteer's campaign is the fact that in the biggest picture of all, his foot is right square on the head of a brown bear.

As you know, the official animal of the state of California is a bear. And any guy who's dumb enough to have a picture of himself with a scrubby three-day beard--you can smell him in the picture--and a rifle and his foot on the dead carcass of a bear, which is our sacred animal here in California, doesn't know the kind of trouble he's going to be in for when the voting time comes.

Ruth: Particularly if you're going to write Shelley's speeches.

Scott: Well, I didn't say that. But anyway, I talked to Phil about some of these matters. Phil is very ambitious politically. I talked about the Burton machine and might have told him that I felt it would be --he and McAteer were buddies, and Phil figured they could make sweet music together--and I said, "For God's sake, Phil, you can't go for this guy. He's too vulnerable. We could put him in jail if we wanted to, you know. He's got a restaurant down in Fisherman's Wharf and one in Sausalito and he's always got little deals going on the side. He's a bad guy for public life." (And I'm saying for public life; this is not a personal statement.) So we disussed this whole San Francisco political thing, and then I had to go in and for a couple of minutes talk to the editorial writers.

These days I have less and less chance to spend much time with

the editorial writing staff. I talked to them, among other things, about Humphrey, because I think the Vice President handled himself really with some dignity, when you consider that the students at Stanford gave him a pretty bad time when he had to somehow act as the spokesman or apologist for this Vietnam thing and so on. This poor guy just has to grin--Humphrey I'm speaking of--and pretend that he's all for it. I just wouldn't want that job for--there's not enough money in the world.

Let's see, I am not going to recapture it all--. Then in the meantime I'm sure I called down to Jon Newhall, my son, who was putting out the Signal, or to Larry Wade about the Signal's business and about the latest on the Newhall-Saugus Job Corps battle. And then there were a couple of very involved matters again down there aside from the Job Corps.

Ruth: The secret meeting of the water board.

Scott: The water board. A secret meeting in violation of the Brown Act where directors of the Board excluded the press.

Ruth: [telephone rings] All right, that was an interruption. Jon had a bulletin to bring from the Signal?

Scott: Yes. He had some news from the Signal on this water board secret meeting, as a matter of fact. (Remind me that later on I talked to Bob Raymer and I'll tell what that was about.)

Then the next thing, I had an engagement--. Oh, and then the phone rang and it was Charlie Thieriot who was going down to the Santa Anita thing, you know. He had to go to a funeral, one of his aunts-in-law died or something, and he was going down to the annual Santa Anita stake race.

Charlie had some comments to make about the size of the type on the commuter crossword puzzle, or something in the comic page, I just don't know what. Oh, I know, we talked for about twenty minutes, a very intricate problem with this Chronicle-Examiner Printing Company amalgamation. He was explaining how we all want to be friends and not screw each other, but how he can screw the rest of them. It's kind of a delicate, diplomatic thing. We had this all worked out in a meeting earlier in the week, when he and I and Randy Hearst and Charles Gould met and thrashed out some problems in newsprint consumption and stuff like that.

It's quite wearing and tearing, some of this, because you should be able to decide it in about twenty minutes. It's just--you either do it one way or another way and that's that.

Then I had a meeting at noon with an agreeable fellow called Lindquist, "Lindy." (I don't know what his first name is, Bill,

maybe.) Young Mr. Lindquist represents David Rockefeller out here in San Francisco. As you know, the Rockefeller people have just bought and announced their plans for the development of a huge area in downtown San Francisco. This is a big and very important area for this city, four blocks right down near the Ferry Building, and the Ferry Building post office and redevelopment of the Golden Gateway neighborhood.

I wanted to talk to Lindquist about a couple of things. I think the Rockefeller plan is not too bad, but specifically what I wanted to talk to Lindquist about was to say that the facade of the old Sailors' Union building which was down there on Commercial Street should be preserved. Before they get out the big steel ball, you know, and start busting it up, I wanted to--.

Ruth: Why did you want to preserve the Sailors' Union?

Scott: Well, I think that this is just absolutely imperative, a must in San Francisco.

Here in town the Sailors' Union Building is widely known as Fink Hall. The longshoremen call the building Fink Hall. Every kid who's ever shipped out of here in the summer as a cadet or something like that went down to Fink Hall and got a temporary permit from the Sailors' Union. Every summer a lot of Bay Area kids tried to ship out as cadets on the trans-Pacific and around-the-world liners.

Ruth: When I was in college everybody used to do that.

Scott: Sure, and then, you know, in the meantime union protesters mobilized at Fink Hall and Rincon Hill during the battle of Rincon Hill in the great general strike in 1934 and so on. Old Andrew Furuseth really started this thing going here in San Francisco, and this is a very strong union.

Ruth: I think they began in the 1880s.

Scott: Harry Lundeberg became the Sailors' Union president later, and he was kind of a pragmatist among labor union leaders. The old San Francisco shipping tycoons used to say you could do business with a man like Harry Lundeberg, you could sort of buy him off. But you couldn't handle Harry Bridges, the Australian who came over and who represented, during the thirties, kind of the left wing, and was head of the Longshore Union.

But anyway, the Sailors' Union hall down there was the hiring hall of the Maritime Union, and the facade of the building is made out of this white ceramic tile with these sort of Moorish embellishments and arches. And there was a stained glass window of old father Neptune, I think, riding a porpoise or whale or

something. All this ornamentation is in one sense a kind of frightful thing, but it's a piece of this city, and the Rockefellers shouldn't take an iron ball and knock it all down.

I said, "Look, why not save the front of the building and put it up down in the Rockefeller's own complex and start up a breadline--I mean, start up a restaurant, and either call it the Sailors' Union, or call it The Breadline, or call it the Irrawaddy Oyster Palace, or something like that. This kind of off-beat hustling will beome so chic, and so "in"--. You put sawdust down on the floor and serve them some sort of dairy lunch, fishes and salads and stuff like that. A restaurant impressario could make a fortune with this kind of scenario. On the other hand, if there is no place for the Sailors' Union facade in the Rockefeller development, we could take the facade and move it over by the Maritime Museum."

Lindy was very receptive to all this. I had already called Justin Herman on Tuesday or Monday--you know, Herman's head of the redevelopment agency in San Francisco--and I told him what I had in mind. He said okay, we'll call the whole thing off--the demolition of the building--until you talk to the Rockefeller people. Then I had, of course, another idea in the back of my head. All of this was happening, you know, before noon or around noon.

Ruth: Where did you meet Mr. Lindquist?

Scott: In my office. And I said, look, instead of going out to lunch, let's eat here. I've got some stuff I want to show you.

Ruth: You mean in the conference room?

Scott: In the conference room. The editorial writers were through by this time. He said, "Oh, great." Time was a little tight, and so we had some awful hamburgers. I've had a bellyache ever since. We just sent out and got some hamburgers, that was all, and some jello. Had to get some jello to coat my stomach, you know, to protect it against the depredation made by these exotic American dishes of varying grease and sauce "to go." Anyway, Lindquist and I were catered by this dreadful restaurant downstairs.

What I really had in the back of my head, aside from saving the facade of Fink Hall, was perhaps one of the biggest civic trademarks that I think could happen to San Francisco. Karl Kortum, a very good friend of mine whom I mentioned before, I believe, is director of the Maritime Museum. And on a trip to the Falkland Islands in search of some old vessels--.

Ruth: This was last year, right?

Scott: That's right. There are a bunch of old vessels down there. Karl, you know, really has tremendous influence in San Francisco. A lot

of people probably don't know it.

Ruth: He sparks all these guys.

Scott: And he gets all these guys going. Karl's pushing and shoving saved Ghirardelli Square. No matter what anybody says, this was his idea. He saved The Cannery also, down between Ghirardelli Square and Fisherman's Wharf.

Ruth: He's got that whole North Point area going.

Scott: Right. And it's just catching fire and still growing. Well, when Karl was down in the Falkland Islands, which are about as far away as you can get--you know, The Falklands are just east of the Strait of Magellan--.

Ruth: One boat a month and no airplanes.

Scott: Yeah. They sent an airplane out, you remember, a couple of months ago, to show the British flag or something, you know. Some Argentine people get very huffy about it. The islands are British, you know, and there's the Falkland Island Company with its headquarters in the City of London, and I mean the City of London, in the heart of downtown England.

Well, anyway, the Falkland harbors are full of these old hulks, both wooden and iron ships that tried to get around Cape Horn and were driven back by storms and were towed in and beached there or something. They were abandoned. And the Falkland Island Company apparently owns these ships, has title to them.

Ruth: By right of salvage.

Scott: Yeah. Those old hulks that still have decking and stuff are used for warehouses, and some ships are just sitting there. Karl discovered what, as I said earlier, is to me the most exciting and important article or artifact in existence today as far as San Franciscans might be concerned. And that is the remains of a wooden sailing ship that came into San Francisco bay in 1849 at the time of the Gold Rush. These were the ships from which the crews deserted and went to the gold fields. The name of the hulk in the Falklands is the Vicar of Bray.

Ruth: Marvelous name.

Scott: It's a wonderful name, and the Vicar himself was an interesting fellow.

Ruth: He was during Henry VIII's time, wasn't he?

Scott: It might have been. I was going to say, I thought it was during the

Stuart regime. But the Vicar was a fleet-footed fellow, switching around from being a royalist to a roundhead to a royalist again.

Ruth: Yeah, he was a Catholic or Protestant.

Scott: Anyway, the Vicar had staying powers, and the ship named in his honor also has some staying power, and the remains of this hull are there. That ship was in San Francisco in 1849 when the Gold Rush really took fire. I believe the Vicar brought some passengers. The crew, of course, most of them disappeared. But the captain was able to get enough guys to get his ship out of the harbor. As you know, under much of the downtown section of San Francisco are the hulls of these old ships that were left to rot or sink. And the idea basically that Karl has sort of generated--.

Ruth: That what Karl does. He generates ideas in people's heads.

Scott: Right. He was dedicated to getting the Vicar of Bray back here in San Francisco, putting it inside a glass pavilion, or in the old Haslett Warehouse at the foot of Hyde Street, or on display somewhere. It would be tragic if the final Gold Rush ship were to disappear.

So, at lunch the other day that's what I really wanted to discuss with Lindy and the Rockefeller crowd, to try and get them interested in salvaging the Vicar. Lindquist seemed to snap at it like a trout. Believe me. He really did. I mean, I had some magnificent brochures and books that Karl produced. Lindquist got so excited. He said, well, I'm going to stay over and I'm going to bring in--I don't know who, General-somebody, and somebody else, two guys he brought in the next day.

I said, "Look, I want to put you together with Karl. Karl knows all about it." I said, "I just want you to know, if you want to incorporate this into the design of your development plan down there at the Embarcadero, we'll give you every bit of support we can. Remember, this is a personal conversation. It's not my idea. It's yours or Karl's. You guys work it out. But the Vicar has got to be brought up here and I think you're just the people to do it."

The Examiner came out the other day, when the Rockefellers announced their plan, and in their typical Examiner Oklahoma fashion--.

Ruth: You're putting down Oklahoma. It was Iowa or Texas a couple of weeks ago.

Scott: Well, the Examiner's chief editor comes from Oklahoma. Literally.

Ruth: What did the Examiner do?

Scott: They said, "Oh, we ought to call this new project 'Rockefeller West' instead of 'Embarcadero Center.'" I suggested to Lindy and his team that if there's any name they shouldn't call their big San Francisco project it is "Rockefeller West." Embarcadero Center is a perfectly good name, because the Embarcadero was the sort of external or peripheral heart of San Francisco, and it was very San Francisco.

But the point I was making to Lindquist was, "Look, if you don't want the Vicar now, just tell me, because basically what we're doing is handing you a million dollars." I said, "With the help of the Vicar, we're going to make you San Franciscans in one easy lesson, and for very little money. And if you are not accepted as San Franciscans, you're going to have trouble. You don't think so, but you will.

Anyway, Lindy was pretty excited about this, and so we had a meeting on the next day and went through the whole thing and Karl's gonna get together with their people. I think maybe, if necessary, we'll send Karl down to Atlanta to see John Portman, who is the chief architact on the project. I talked to Lindquist on Thursday about some of these ideas and concepts and how he could become an instant Californian--or David Rockefeller could. And so we had lunch, hamburgers, and then he had to go.

Then what happened? Okay, I was trying to say that my days melt into each other. After lunch with Lindquist, as I recall, I wrote an editorial for the Signal. I write most of them, not all of them, but most of them, and I wrote the editorial about this executive session of the water district down there and how they were in violation of the Brown Act. I remember, however, before dictating it I called up the water district lawyer down in Los Angeles. I wanted to give him a fair chance to refute the facts as they had been told to me--specifically, that the general manager of the water district got up and said he would not discuss in public some matters pertaining to the annexation adjoining Newhall-Saugus real estate. According to the Brown Act, that is not legal--a normal annexation must be discussed in public.

Ruth: Didn't you ask him if they had discussed these matters in the executive session?

Scott: Well, I asked him first, "Did the Board chairman say that he would not discuss this problem?" The lawyer said, "I don't remember," and then I said, "Well, what did you discuss in private, besides personnel matters?" And he said, "I don't remember." And so I advised him to get some of these cheap comic magazines that advertise, you know, memory courses.

I ended up writing an ill-tempered piece, which is just a ridiculous editorial basically. As I recall, the title of the editorial was, "This Has Got To Stop."

Ruth: And then what happened?

Scott: Well, all of this is not exactly in chronological order, but I should mention that in between and during all these things I am talking about, there are people bringing in stories or editorials, or stuff to be read. For example, I had to change one story, a lead on a labor story. I felt it should be more accurate, and also I didn't want the writer to be fired, beacuse at the moment he's out of favor with some of my Chronicle colleagues, or at least one of them.

Ruth: You told me to mention Bob Raymer.

Scott: Yes, I received a copy of a so-called retraction and a possible lawsuit. Bob Raymer, who is one of the partners at Cooper, White & Cooper, a very good friend of mine, a good, smart man, believe me--I mean, most lawyers aren't worth a damn, you have to tell them exactly what to do, and then they have books, you know, with certain form letters and sample suits, and they fill in the blanks and send them along for you--but Bob has been just a tremendous help to me. I can talk to him almost like a sounding board to decide what I am going to do.

I talked to him for about twenty minutes or so, just about this "possible retraction."

[Tape, Side 2]

Ruth: Thursday evening I talked to you about meeting for dinner, and you said there was someone waiting for you, waiting to talk to you.

Scott: Gordon was there talking to me at the time. That's right. I went out to dinner that night. I'm leaving out a lot of stuff. Unfortunately, we should have had this interview the next day, right off on Thursday.

Let's see, politics. I'm just trying to think of the different fields, if I talked to anybody in Sacramento on Thursday, and I didn't. As I say, I talked with Raymer about this lawsuit, and there were probably twenty calls which were just calls, you know, from Jon or someone.

Ruth: You got a letter about Yvonne D'Angers.

Scott: Oh, mail, sure. All my mail is there, and stuff I have to read--proofs and such, editorials. That's right.

I did get a letter about Yvonne D'Angers, telling us some stuff about her early life. You remember Yvonne was San Francisco's favorite Persian Lamb, whom I've already talked about at great

length.

Ruth: The letter was from--you might mention where it came from.

Scott: Well, it came from Tehran, all the way from Iran, a packet of clippings from Tehran. It was full of material which showed Yvonne, this topless dancer, as a girl of fifteen being given the top award for excellence in her school--I think it was in her art studies--anyway, in school in Tehran, in Iran. She's this little girl, very nice little girl, she really is, and she came over here to America just a couple of years later, after getting her scholastic honors in Iran. There were some clips in the letter about her father, who was going to sue the U.S. government or some damn thing, I don't know.

Ruth: For cutting off his source of support?

Scott: Exactly, sure. But here's a kid who really did well back home, you know, in the old country. And as I have recounted elsewhere, after she had been here in the good old United States of America for a while, suddenly our brilliant immigration department decided to deport this dangerous foreigner as an undesirable alien.

Ruth: Well, to come back to some of the other things that you were doing.

Scott: Then I had to spend about a half an hour retouching Tiffany Jones. I have to repaint it, you know, every two or three weeks.

Ruth: What do you mean, you had to repaint Tiffany Jones?

Scott: Yeah, that's what I had to do Thursday night. You see, Tiffany Jones, this slick new comic strip, is a real live monument to the low grade intellectual hypocrisy of most American editors. Tiffany was a comic strip created by a former high fashion illustrator. And the original plot of Tiffany Jones was a story about an attractive young girl who raced around the world with the intercontinental jet set.

The story itself was perfectly clean and almost virginal. It was really aimed at teenage girls. But in the original samples of the early episodes of Tiffany, the artists had depicted the young heroine as actually possessing breasts. As a matter of fact, as I recall, Tiffany would have needed about a 32B brassiere--that is, if she used any bra at all.

Now remember, we are talking about 1967, not 1867, but even so, the editors of America, particularly the editors of Eastern and Middle-Western America, for some reason would not buy the adventures of Tiffany Jones unless the authors performed a mastectomy on her and pictured the young lady without any glandular paraphenalia. And, as far as I was concerned, this was stupid, hypocritical, sanctimonious editorial hokum, and I was irritated. So, as a

result, whenever a week or two of Tiffany Jones proofs came in, I would spend whatever recreational time I had in the office retouching Tiffany with brush and poster paint, and rearrange her cleavage and turn her into a proper young woman.

I had already done the first part of the last couple of weeks of the strip. And Thursday evening I tried to finish up this latest job of what you or someone else decribed as painting "hard-core Tiffany." That took a while, and I'm not quite finished with that sequence yet.

Ruth: Well, anyhow, let's come on to--then I think that takes care of Thursday, doesn't it? And at the end of the day?

Scott: There were two or three more things, actually, I might remember--.

Ruth: Do you generally keep a diary?

Scott: Oh, a schedule, yes, but not in any serious detail. But I'm just trying to think what other projects I was going on.

Didn't I talk to you, Jon--my son, who runs the Signal, who is here tonight with us here in the room--didn't I talk to you on Thursday? About Reverend Sam and this dragster thing? That was Thursday, wasn't it?

Ruth: You might mention that project, too.

Scott: Well, see, this also took place on Thursday, one of the calls. Down near the Newhall Ranch, there is a community situated up a box canyon called Val Verde, which is basically a negro community. In Val Verde there are absolutely no serious sort of recreation facilities for the kids.

Ruth: It's sort of a tiny, little rural ghetto.

Scott: It is a rural ghetto in a box canyon. You know, they're going to seal it up some day, too, if we're not careful. And I mentioned to the most able, or I should say the most personable, outgoing man out in Val Verde, a gentleman called Reverend Samuel Dixon, who is with the--oh, I don't know, the church of the Five Square Gospel, or what is it?

Jon: Macedonian Church of God in Christ.

Scott: Macedonian Church of God in Christ. And the name is--well, this particular house of the Lord is not exactly Canterbury Cathedral, but anyway, the Reverend Sam is a very, very fine man, and he is out there not because he likes it, but because he wants to do something to help his congregation. And the other day I asked the Reverend Sam Dixon if he thought the kids out there--if I were to give them a

drag racing machine or a race car chassis and the engine parts and all the stuff that was needed, if they would like to build one up, and would it be a good project? And I happened to call Jon at a time when the Reverend Sam was, I think, sitting across the desk. Is that right, Jon?

Jon: Exactly.

Scott: And Jon told me that Sam was in a little trouble because he wasn't exactly sure at this point what a dragster was, but the kids had become so enthusiastic about it, had been bugging him so much that they had come to the church or something, hadn't they, for the first time in history, or in the front row.

Jon: They had gone to meetings, and they had gone to church, and everything, for the first time.

Scott: And they kept saying, "When are we going to get the dragster, when are we going to get it?" And he said, "Gee, we've got to produce," and we had a long conversation about this. And in the next day or two I've got to get another chassis because I have, as you know, this one dragster chassis that I kinda hate to--.

Ruth: You want them to build up their own racing machine, basically, right?

Scott: Well, I'd like to give them all the parts and tools. Then they would put it together and make their own machine, so it would be theirs. And so I spent some time talking with both Jon and the good Reverend about how we can do this, and agreed to meet them down there at Val Verde next Saturday at 11:00, I guess--what did we end up with, 10:00 or 11:00?

Jon: Eleven o'clock.

Scott: Eleven o'clock, and talk it over with the kids and really see that it's a serious matter. I want to see the kids really get out there and do something.

Ruth: How many kids do they have between sixteen and twenty-one?

Scott: Jon knows.

Jon: He says about fifteen. He thinks about half of these are very much interested in the project.

Ruth: Fifteen or fifty?

Jon: Fifteen. He says about six or seven are probably interested, or maybe more. Other than that, there's nothing to do.

Scott: The youngsters have nothing to do.

Jon: He says absolutely nothing.

Scott: And are they even closing up the Val Verde park, you know, earlier, so at night the kids can't go to the park?

Ruth: Not even in the summer evenings. They close it at 5:00.

Scott: So that was another little project I was working on during the day. And let's see--.

[Aside] That's apparently Jon talking to his twin brother, Tony, in the background.

Ruth: Wait a minute. May I turn this off for a moment? All right. You said you hadn't said anything about bacanora.

Scott: Yeah. Well, simply that in one of the phone calls during the afternoon sometime I talked to Larry Wade down at the Signal again, and we have a personal project going of introducing a tequila-like drink. This is personal, this is not even Signal business or anything else. It began, you remember, with the De Anza bone promotion of the Chronicle's, which I have not yet really discussed --I think it would merit some discussion. But, anyway, Larry has a bartender down there in Newhall who is concocting some kind of--

Ruth: Down in Newhall?

Scott: That's right. A drink that will make bacanora palatable. It's, you know, one of these cactus distillates, bootleg booze from the back country of Sonora. And bacanora goes way back, and we've been through a lot of trouble to get the name, trademark, and get bottles and every other damned thing, and labels and all that, simply because it's a project and we're doing it. Now, this bacanora project is not, for example, a study in classical American journalism, but it was a small part of last Thursday. So, Larry called me about some plans to fly down to Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora, to get some good stuff. Some gold label bacanora from the tiny little town of Arispe up in the mountains of northern Mexico.

[End, February 25 1967 interview]

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On Being a Newspaper Photographer

[Edited transcript of an interview with Scott Newhall conducted by Ruth Newhall in 1967.]

I walked up and asked the desk clerk, was Mr. Weismuller there. I suppose I should say for the record that Mr. Weismuller was the most famous swimmer of all time. He was sort of the Babe Ruth or Bill Tilden or Bobby Jones of swimming, held Olympic and world records, and was the most famous of the Tarzan characters in the cinema. He had this great Tarzan yell, and he was a big, big handsome guy, and Lupe was a fiery little girl whom I thought very, very attractive. Lupe was also a movie personality. This was one of these movie marriages. They'd get married and unmarried, and nobody knew whether they were getting divorced or married or what.

So I went up to the Alexander Hamilton Hotel and asked the desk clerk if he would put me through. The clerk was shocked that I should be so indiscreet as to ask at the Alexander Hamilton for someone by name. So I walked over to the house phone--and I was very nervous inside, mind you. I not only didn't know how to make a picture, I didn't know how to get hold of anybody, how to talk to anybody.,

I think I should mention right here that the main reason, or at least another reason, that I got a job in the newspaper business was because I was afraid to talk to people. We used to call it inferiority complex, and now they would say I didn't "relate well" or something like that, or some other post-Freudian term, or some damn thing. I remember I used to get on street cars in San Francisco and ride to the end of the line and then ride back because I was too embarrassed to ask the conductor which was the proper street to get off at. When you're in that kind of shape, and that sort of nervous and self-centered condition, you need some kind of shock therapy. I figured the newspaper business would either kill me or cure me. As you know, now I won't shut off. I have been ordered off of street cars for talking too much to conductors.

Anyhow, I got on the house phone, all scared inside, and asked for Mr. Weismuller, and the operator said, "There's nobody like that here," and the desk clerk threw me out of the hotel. This young punk, you know, hanging around. I stood out on the sidewalk and figured, "Okay, they told me to come and get a picture. I'll just wait and get a picture."

I must have waited for an hour or two, and pretty soon out came this big handsome hunk of man, and this really quite attractive lady, or woman, Lupe. She was done up in a coat, I recall, and flat shoes, in a gaily informal Hollywood-stylish way. I quickly walked up to them.

"Aren't you Mr. Weismuller?" I asked. "I've always admired you so much, and the way you swim--I used to swim a little myself. I'm up here from the Chronicle to get your picture. It's my first day on my first job." I leveled with him. "If I don't get a picture, I'm going to be through. I'm telling you the truth."

He took a funny look at Lupe and she just began to laugh, and he said, "All right, where do you want us?" I said, "Well, why don't you get over there next to the post box." So they posed there and said, "What shall we do?" Everyone apparently told them what to do. I said, "Don't do anything, just look at each other," and I started making what I hoped were some pictures.

I went back to the Chronicle and went through the routine that Ansel Adams had outlined in his book. To my utter amazement, in the dark room--and I had remembered to turn the lights out and so on while developing the film--there was something on the negatives. I had way overexposed them, but there was something. So then I had to make some prints, and I will never forget that one of the old-time photographers, Ted Pryor, came in and said, "Boy, you've got a lousy negative there. But let me help you print it." We put it in the enlarger and concentrated the light in certain places--we called it "dodging"--and a very grainy, contrasty, technically quite bad picture was produced from this roll of film which I had overexposed.

I went running out with it to the city editor, and he took a look. I'll never forget, he said, "This is just the sort of stuff we want!" I had expected to be fired! There were two people looking at each other, that was all, no props, except they were leaning against this post-box. He said, "This is the sort of thing that is going to save newspapers!" He talked to me about what to write for a caption. And they played it quite prominently in the paper.

I phoned Ruth and said, "The picture actually came out. I still have a job. I haven't been fired yet!" That, I guess, was the end of my first assignment. Since then, every day has been about the same, because I'm still surprised when something I do turns out right. But I have become philosophical and decided that no matter what you do or what decision you make, it will always turn out all right, just so long as you make a decision. It doesn't matter. Make a picture, write a story, make a decision. As long as you get it done, it will be all right.

I was a photographer for about a year, which takes some explaining. To begin with, being a photographer is hard work. Newspaper photography right now is a little in the doldrums because most editors don't know a damn thing about pictures. They don't know what it's going to look like. They've never studied art. I can be quite

serious that the best thing that ever happened to me was being an art major. The art department gave me a feeling for graphics that has been more important to me in terms of newspaper typography or other graphics, layouts, anything. It made my professional life. Without it I would have lost my job.

To me one of the great tragedies of newspapering, then and now, for the last thirty, forty, fifty years is that except for very rare instances most newspapermen have been extensions of the writing field, of the economics field, of the political sciences field. A newspaperman thinks that it is simply a business of writing. It is not, at all. The newspaper is a graphic product. It is something to be read, to be sure. But--and these are my own personal feelings on the matter--I am convinced that all successful newspapers, as well as all successful printed media, have been those which to begin with look as if they should be read. With a couple of exceptions, like the New York Times, and so on, most newspapers are just great, soggy masses, but they are the only game in town, so as a result they have a certain acceptance.

During the 1920s there were some very vigorous tabloids in New York. Some of the English papers were very lively. Mr. William Randolph Hearst, the elder Hearst, was a great, not art critic, but he had a tremendous appreciation of art forms. Anybody who could put together a home of the style that he did down at San Simeon, which I never have visited by the way, anybody who amasses just the amount of crud that he collected, does have a tremendous feeling for graphics, whether or not one would agree in every case with his taste. I happen personally to have a great respect for old William Randolph Hearst's artistic sensibilities, I really do. His journalistic efforts were thoroughly repugnant to me, of course.

I have found, both to my delight and at times my horror, that the greatest asset I had to offer the newspaper business was an art sense. You can learn to write, a reasonably smart guy can learn to write pretty fast, but an art sense takes a certain amount of exposure, training, travel, teaching, and education. I found that I was able, very rapidly, after being a photographer to enter into all other areas of the newspaper business because of my art training. I could make up a page, I could lay out a page, I could design one, I could choose decent type. It was not a mystery. It was not that I had to look at a little list to see what sort of heads, or this, that and the other. I could pick the whole thing up very rapidly.

As far as I am concerned, I think that--I've never told this to anyone much--a major in art is perhaps a good deal more valuable, or can be more valuable to your potential newspaper writer, reporter, editor, or whatever--obviously photographer--than the typical major in economics, in political science, in journalism. You can pick up the techniques of journalism when you go to work, but you don't pick up much of the background of Gothic art, or the Renaissance, or different eras.

The study of art opens up a whole world of noble human experience.

Renaissance paintings, many of which are among the most beautiful things that man has achieved, were propaganda leaflets of their day. They were pushing the Christian God, or one of the many Christian saints.

I studied a lot of philosophy when I was in school--or shall I say I attended a number of philosophy courses, enough so that this whole business of mass culture and the physical representations that illustrate this culture are intensely interesting to me. I still read, and except for dirty books which I read from time to time till they get too boring, I read only historical novels, usually, because they're painless. It's like putting a little sugar coating outside a vitamin pill. I am still devoted to this whole historical study of how man has related to his environment on our planet Earth.

When I first went to work in the newspaper business, and still today--one is almost ashamed to tell people in this business--when I tell them I was an art major, they laugh and think of a pair of sandals, or giving out buttons, or marching forward against Vietnam. You name it. And yet the artist to me is a philosopher. He is one of those elite who really live in a world that is above and beyond and removed from this mortal world of trouble and stress and bigotry. The true artist and the true newspaperman should, or can, report what they see, as some of the Athenian philosophers did. It is the function they fulfill.

The first year I spent at the Chronicle as a photographer I was a novitiate, an apprentice person. I learned to make pictures fast enough. It took me a week or so and I was as good at pictures as the next photographer. In two weeks you make maybe better ones, who knows? But I was an apprentice person. I used to write a little, too. Union contracts were not so rigid as they are now, and if they could find a photographer who could write an English sentence, they would get them to write. I would make a little candid picture of somebody, and write a little story about it.

But mostly I spent that year learning now people, superficially, behaved. I spent a great deal of time with death. I saw a lot of murders and a lot of violent deaths, because you're called out at all hours of the day and night to cover murders, fires, accidents, all that kind of thing. It's like a forge. If you are at all sensitive, death is not a terribly attractive sight, believe me.

There were a number of occasions on which I would have to inform families that one of their members had met an untimely end. I would go ring the doorbell, and the mother would come to the door. I could tell by looking at her that she didn't know what had happened. I would have to tell her that her husband or son or mother or somebody had been run down by a train or a car or drowned or killed in an airplane crash or something. Then I would have to stay with them. I couldn't help it. I couldn't just coolly say this and run away.

I should explain there that it was, and still is, the practice that the moment a tragedy strikes--and tragedy is always considered News

with a capital N--the city editor tells a photographer to go get a picture of either the person who has met the violent fate, or a picture of his family. The newspapers are wired in, literally, with the police department--they get the news just about as fast as the police do--and so many times the photographer of a newspaper is the first person, not only at the scene, but at the home.

I remember on one occasion I had to get the picture of a child who had been drowned out at the beach. I had to break that news slowly. It took me quite a while. I used to work Sundays, and this sort of thing happens on Sundays a lot, as anyone who follows statistics knows. Drownings, crashes, accidental deaths happen on Sundays because there are so many people roaming around doing different things. So, here was this young mother, and her child had been drowned. She was over in the Western Addition, near Fillmore. I tried to break it gently. It's pretty hard to break it gently to a stranger, because they know right away, they just have a funny feeling.

I told her there had been accident and her child had been involved, and the newspaper didn't know yet the extent of the tragedy, or how serious the injuries had been. I had just been sent out to get a picture of the child. I said this was just beastly, just terrible. "I can understand the torture I have brought into your home my bringing this news." I said, "Do you have a picture?" There was a framed photograph on the grand piano in the living room--it was not a sumptuous apartment at all, but there was a grand piano with one of those typical silk shawls or something draped on it, with the framed picture of the only child.

She said, "Oh, hell! Take this. What good's it going to do me?" She gave me the picture, frame and all. I hadn't yet told her the child was dead. I said, "I'm going to come back and bring the picture back, and then we'll all know how serious this has been." I said, "I wouldn't worry too much, because worry won't help you." I told her that the Coast Guard had said there might have been some fatalities in this and--. She was there alone, I don't know what the family status was, so far as a husband went.

I took the picture and ran down and copied it in the darkroom. A lot of photographers on other papers--I don't want to be specific, but some photographers on our own paper as well--are fairly heartless about just taking photographs and disappearing. But in about a half hour I went back out, and she had not yet been told anything further. So I sat and waited with her, just passing the time. She didn't know who to call, and I wasn't going to.

You see, the thing was unravelling at the time. The child was being taken to emergency, and so forth. It's pretty hard to find out anything unless you go down to the emergency room. She was going to be informed by the police when the child was pronounced dead by a legally constituted authority. So I just sat and waited until the police officers came, because I felt she shouldn't be left alone. Now this is not in a sense the "old pro" newspaper practice, but this is

the sort of thing you have to go through to see the way people live on our planet here. This used to get to me. I didn't like it.

I was one of the first people there when some barfly girl was murdered. I say murdered, right out of hand, although there was a trial later and the accused person was acquitted. I happen to know he was as guilty as hell because I was there and he was sitting there telling me how badly he felt about killing her. You can't kid me that this fellow hadn't killed her. You can't tell me he would be sitting there covered with blood, head to foot, apologizing to me for killing this woman, and then be innocent. But that is a story in itself, and there's no use going through that now.

You walk in on suicides, and you smell it as soon as you enter the room. This whole business of violent death is something that you just have to get used to. I saw a great deal of that, because so much of a photographer's life is made up of two extremes--I guess there are actually more--two very contradictory aspects of society. One is the violence, the bloodshed, both accidental and purposeful, which usually is confined to the middle class or the proletariat.

The other extreme is the society-fashions-women's page photographs. I would say that at least half the pictures, or more, made by local newspaper photographers appear in the women's pages--and sports, I should add. On the one hand you have this violent, sweaty, world of death. On the other you have this deodorized, social world of gaiety, of charm, of recipes, home-making and all that stuff you find in the women's section. Then you have the wonderful world of sports, which is sort of fun.

And of course the bigger and more narcissistic the city is, the more exciting the photographic journalism, the more violence, odds and ends, bits and pieces. You don't have to fall back on service club news and speeches made by the chief of police. I know the bigger the Chronicle gets, the less attention we can pay to the local events that are essentially utterly boring but so much a part of the city--the college women's club speaker, the "sons and daughters of whatever" function. Except for sports. Sports is a thing unto itself, just a whole world where there are lots of pictures used. It's routine that when you have a sporting event you send more photographers out there than there are players in the field, in some cases.

I remember on one occasion when I was covering one of the Cal football games as a photographer, the Call-Bulletin established a carrier pigeon service. The photographers would take their 35-millimeter film and make a little roll and attach it to a carrier pigeon. They would release the pigeon, and it would fly home to the Call-Bulletin, theoretically, where the staff of photographers would develop the pictures, you see. They made a big thing about their carrier pigeon service. None of it mattered much, because the Call was a terrible newspaper, and the pictures weren't very good anyway. But they had a lot of fun with it.

At the Chronicle, Frenchy, one of the old photographers, and I had to cover the next game. So we had our own little counter-promotion. We got a duck, and made our pictures on the regular 4 x 5 plates with plate-holders, and we put them all in a sack and tied them to the duck's leg and then let the duck loose to run around the field during a time out, or something, just to put the knock on the Call-Bulletin. It was kind of our "flying goose service," or something. That was just a sidelight.

There was a certain amount of competition among the newspapers, even among the photographers. The photographers are worse gossips than the reporters, or anybody else. They are like women at the village well as they stand around their developing tanks. You can hear more misinformation, and more information, too, and you can hear more, in a sense, wisdom about your city's characters and leaders than perhaps almost anywhere else in a newspaper. A lot of reporters are intense and young and reformers. Your photographers tend a little bit to be philosophers and observers. They are not the reformers the reporters tend to be.

As I said, the first year I was on the Chronicle was a year of being an apprentice person, just learning what people are like, how they react, how to relate to them. That's what I did the first year. Some of the agonies come back to me as I sit here talking, the agonies you have to witness and sometimes participate in. You have to harden yourself. And that's why I use the great cliche that it's a forge.

You have to temper yourself, to make yourself tough enough so you don't let it get to you, so you don't identify with it. But too many newspapermen, in my opinion, a great many newspaper men, went overboard the other way and rejected the whole thing, and refused to communicate with it. They would make jokes or laugh about human tragedy, or they would anesthetize themselves, particularly with strong drink.

It's not an accident that these guys used to drink a lot. They don't much any more--oh, sure they do, in a sense, they get out and do a lot of drinking. But when I went to work the newspaper man was notorious, the man with the hat pushed back on his head, the press pass, and so on.

The first day I went to work as a photographer--each of us had our own darkrooms to develop and enlarge the photograph--there stretched out on the bench of my enlarger was one of our star reporters, passed out, dead drunk. I thought, "Man, I've really hit the jackpot! This is the newspaper business." Since then the incidence of alcohol, or its impact on the working press, has declined rapidly, so far as I am concerned.

Suzanne;

Here is the letter relating to the Bank of America's efforts to secure the parcel of San Francisco land necessary for their new world headquarters at California and Montgomery streets. This is a draft suggested that I proposed the Bank submit to the city highway committee, in an effort to clear up the title to the property the bank desired for their headquarters. I had discussed this with San Stewart who was highly placed B of A officer. He was also the father-in-law of Jim Dickason who was then running our family White Investment Company and later became President and finally Chairman of the Board of the Newhall Land and Farming Company.

I imagine that anyone who cares to pursue this matter may ve able to find an official version of this application on file with the Supervisors' committee at about this date.

Acon

I think this application was eminently successful. I do not know who signed it for the bank.

A.N.

Bank of America

January 31, 1964

Streets and Highways Committee
of the Board of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco
City Hall
San Francisco, California

Dear Sirs:

There is pending before the Board of Supervisors a petition by our Bank for relinquishing a right-of-way easement along Spring Street south of California (approximately one-half block), and Summer Street from Kearny to Spring (approximately one-third of a block). This petition was heard and its approval recommended by the Streets and Highways Committee in December, last year, but when the recommendation came before the Board of Supervisors on December 30, 1963, we understand that it was referred back to your Honorable Committee for further consideration.

We have previously written to the Board of Supervisors respecting our plans but, since there have been changes in membership of both the Board and the Committee on Streets and Highways, we should like at this time to give you additional facts and, if there is any other information you would like to have, we respectfully invite your questions.

Our Bank now controls either through fee ownership or long-term lease all of the property fronting on the easterly side of Kearny Street running from Pine Street to California Street, and all of the property fronting on the southerly side of California Street running from Kearny Street to Montgomery Street. This includes not only the property encompassing the two rights-of-way mentioned above, but all the land on both sides of the streets as well.

With the thought that our philosophy of planning may be of some interest to your committee, and to the Board, we are pleased to explore this matter with you in depth.

The reasons we assembled this large and centrally located block of property were far more compelling than a simple real estate adventure. In essence, we are bankers,

not real estate brokers.

We are planning to build a new headquarters for our entire banking enterprise. This edifice will be our front door to all the world; we envision that it shall become a respected, world-wide landmark for this and certainly the next generation.

Therefore, this site was chosen with great care. Whatever modest success we have enjoyed in the past, has mirrored the success of our native city, San Francisco. When we build our new headquarters we are determined that all the people of this city shall be proud of it. With all humility we hope that it shall be considered one of the great architectural achievements of the modern world.

The scope of our project is so great, and its importance to us so urgent, that our planning must proceed as soon as possible. And, the sound planning necessary to an undertaking of this magnitude cannot be accomplished until we know the limitations of the land on which we will build.

There have been a number of idle rumors that we are planning some monstrous structure that would overpower and overcrowd San Francisco. That we wish to build a box reaching half-way to the heavens.

This is not at all true. We shall build nothing that will clash with any of San Francisco's architectural criteria - either now or at the future date when our building actually starts. We are clearly aware of the crisis in downtown urban development.

We are convinced that this undertaking will add great value to downtown San Francisco, and these values will be measured both in real estate dollars and in beauty.

As you know, we have assembled far more land than we need for the structure itself, simply so that we can surround our new headquarters with air and light, and embellish our building with such luxuries as trees, arcades and plazas.

This land is dedicated to an exciting long range plan. We now hold title to all necessary land areas, including the small parcels over which the city holds a right-of-way easement. These rights-of-way were important when the property adjoining them resided in different, separate ownerships.

Now that these separate ownerships no longer exist, you may agree with us that the need for these rights-of-way also have disappeared. The prolongation of these now unnecessary and unused rights of passage could seriously hamper the planning phase of our project. If you so agree, ~~and will grant to us clear title~~, then our planning and our building shall get underway.

We wish to repeat that it is our firm intention in the new construction to conform to - and indeed to stay within - whatever density requirements are applicable to the area when the building goes up. You also have our assurance that our plans when drawn will conform to the letter to whatever requirements may be established by the City Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

The interests of the Bank in this project coincide with those of the Board of Supervisors and the City Planning Commission. Orderly, intelligent planning will be greatly facilitated and expedited by the Board's early approval of our petition for the vacation of the easements on Spring and Summer Streets, which we again most respectfully request.

San Francisco Magazine, July/August 196

MY SEARCH FOR SCOTT NEWHALL

by John Luce

The San Francisco *Chronicle* is frequently damned for its failure to provide "hard news"—both national and international. It has been called a daily magazine rather than a *news*paper in the tradition of the *New York Times*. On the other hand, it has been praised for its liberal attitude and the liveliness of its columnists. Since any newspaper reflects the personality of its editor, John Luce interviewed and studied the Chronicle's Scott Newhall, the man he believes is the real voice of "The Voice of the West."

If I didn't know him, I said to myself s I stood in Scott Newhall's office, I ight think Scott was not the Executive ditor of the *Chronicle* at all.

In fact, I wrote in my notebook, his ffice seems to be more of a sanctuary an the command post of a busy newsaper. Its subdued, brown and green decor nd leather-backed chairs show a conrvatism and calm. The copper-trimmed hographs on the wall, the silver ashtrays nd that bronze cannon in the corner eak of a deep, historical consciousness. is room, I reflected, could be used by a ayor to greet VIPs. It might belong to a ofessor or a retired admiral writing his emoirs.

I sat in front of Scott's desk and anned the walls. Directly before me was plaque, on which two topless women, lied in gossamer, were holding up a eld. At the bottom of the plaque was a oll and the Latin word: *AMO*. On the ll behind me was a portrait of Lucius ebe, in top hat and tails, leaning on his e in the Garden Court of the Palace tel. Near it was another painting. It wed an Englishman, in military unim, sitting before a window that overked a harbor. The Englishman had a leg and held a spyglass in his hand. A nge, furry animal was playing on the r beneath him. In the harbor, a sailing was firing on a Chinese junk. Quite ressive, I thought: it gives the room a

His desk, I noted, was on a diagonal with that of his secretary, Dolly Rheed. Behind it was a black safe, about one and a half feet square, on which was painted the name: THE IRRAWADDY STEAM NAVIGATION CO. An alabaster reproduction of Botticelli's "Venus on the Half Shell" was siting on top of the safe. On the wall above it was a model of a side-wheel steamer similar to that in the painting. The ship was called the "Burma Queen." The desk itself was cluttered with unopened mail, copies of the *Chronicle*, hot rod magazines and a paperback on hippies. On the side nearest me was a brass tray in which brass fish were supporting a copper globe mounted with a rectangular silver bar. The edges of the bar were inscribed with the words: *Sir Waldo Lovelock Scott*. On the upper face was printed: *.900 Fine—Five Taels; The Irrawaddy Counting House at Rangoon*. On the globe was: *The Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co., Rangoon, 1917; First Silver Bullion Bar Minted Under Royal Charter*.

I saw the bar and started to laugh. The Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co., I knew, was a bogus outfit, one of Scott's favorite toys, and he was Chairman of its Board. I had first heard of it at the Cate School, near Santa Barbara, where I was a classmate of Scott's son, Jon. There, we had formed a rocket society and were hoping for a formal competition to test our missiles against a rival organization. One night at dinner, our headmaster announced that Rangoon," had put up a cash prize for the highest altitude achieved at the soon-to-be-held "First International Cate School Rocket Trials." After dinner, I asked Jon who this mysterious benefactor could be. "That," he answered, "is my old man."

Seeing the Irrawaddy again sent me into a reverie about my experiences with the Newhalls. Jon, a short, scrappy boy who had had polio in his leg as a child, was a close friend at Cate. I first met his parents when they took us to the Newhall family ranch in the Santa Clarita Valley, forty miles North of Los Angeles, for a weekend. Later, I spent an August with the Newhalls at Tahoe, where I met Jon's older brother, Skip, and Tony, his fraternal twin. I remembered our pranks at the Lake and Scott's stories of the *Chronicle* and the characters—celebrities, kooks and ordinary citizens—who came to see him there. I always liked Scott; he was a great storyteller and a compassionate man.

I was still smiling from the memories when Scott walked into his office from an adjoining washroom. He was wearing a blue suit, a pinstripe shirt with gold coin cufflinks and a blue tie. He moved slowly, pivoting off his artificial leg, and stood behind his desk, smiling that same, fatherly smile I had known as a boy. We shook hands and sat down. It was five o'clock:

"Well," I said, breaking the ice after almost ten years, "it's good to see you again. I gather the Irrawaddy is into silver these days."

"Oh, yes," he said, grinning mischievously. He reached into his desk, pulled out another silver bar and fondled it lovingly in his short, stubby hands. I mentioned the Rocket Trials and asked him what the Irrawaddy had done lately. He answered with the same slow, ponderous voice I remembered, totally serious as he put me on.

"Well, let's see. We've been minting money. We have been in the area of transportation: competition autos, vintage cars. A rather diversified company."

"Where are you headquartered?"

"We used to be in the janitor's closet at the White Investment Company, but the mail piled up so. Most of our activities center here now."

I had hoped to get some straight answers from our interview, but I was getting nowhere, fast. "Tell me," I asked him, "was there ever really such a company in existence?"

Scott sat forward in his chair. His smile widened and then slanted up the right side of his face, making him look a little mad. "Isn't there always an Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co.," he answered, staring me down.

I laughed, embarrassed by his intensity, and groped for another question:

"Who is 'Sir Waldo Lovelock Scott?' "

He pointed at the peg-legged Englishman across the room. "Sir Waldo Lovelock Scott," he said, "lately of Rangoon. The founder of the firm."

"One more question," I said, looking up at the topless standard bearers. "What's that?"

He turned in his chair. "That," he said, "is the Scott family coat of arms."

"O.K. Now I'd like to ask you about your career."

"Couldn't we talk about something interesting? Why do you have to do this story?"

I shifted in my seat, fishing for excuses like a kid confronted by his school principal. "*San Francisco* thinks you're one of the most important and least publicized men in town," I said. "I happen to believe you are a good part of the San Francisco consciousness. Besides, I'd like to see the Newhalls again."

Scott sat back in his chair, gazed at the ceiling, and then proceeded to list all the reasons why I shouldn't waste my time on him. He was, he told me, "not the *Chronicle*" and "not the only indispensable man in town." But he was enjoying himself, enormously. Finally, perhaps because I did nothing but smile stupidly throughout his performance, the interview got underway.

I started by telling Scott what I had learned of him from "Who's Who in the West": that he was born in San Francisco on January 21, 1914, the son of Almer M. and Anna Nicholson (Scott) Newhall. I knew that his father had been active in the H. M. Newhall Co., an import-export firm. I asked Scott if his father had wanted him to join the business.

"No," he answered, "he never made up my mind for me."

"Did you decide on journalism in school?"

"Actually, it was never discussed. A teacher once asked us what we were going to do when we grew up. My answer was: 'to retire.' "

"What schools did you go to?"

"There was the Tamalpais School for Boys, Tamalpais High, the San Rafael Military Academy, the Webb School for Boys, Lawrenceville and the Webb School for Boys again. But I never got a diploma, except for a certificate in welding from the Samuel Gompers Trade School. I always seemed to quit just before final exams."

According to "Who's Who," Scott studied at Cal from 1932 through 1935. I asked him if he was interested in journalism there.

"No," he answered, "I was an art major. I was involved with the 'Occident,' a literary magazine. Kind of a circulation manager. We sold quite a few copies, but the editors were interested more in being literary than in increasing sales, so they let me go. I did publish a little magazine with a fraternity brother. It was very Edwardian, as opposed to the liberal, United Front, League-for-Peace-and-Decency sort of thing. We did it purely as an antidote."

"And you got married at Cal?"

"Yes, Ruth was a secretary and teaching assistant in the art department."

"You started at the *Chronicle* in 1935 as a photographer and eventually worked your way up to Editor of "This Wor[ld]" Sunday Editor and Operations Mana[ger]. But you took a year off, didn't you, [and] set out around the world?"

"Yes. I came here to work and aft[er a] year I'd had it. I was beaten up a [few] times too many for my alabaster bod[y]. I had enough money to buy a boat th[at] $2500. I remember we sailed out [the] Golden Gate on this forty-two foot ke[tch], called the *Mermaid*, in 1936, ab[out] March. We had fourteen cents in [our] pockets but plenty of food on board. We planned to do magazine pieces. Well, we fooled around a lot; it took us almo[st a] year to reach Acapulco. When we got there I got an infection in my leg [and] almost died. We went to Mexico [City;] they had good relations with German[y] those days and had some new drugs [that] weren't available in America. They s[aved] my life; if I had gotten sick here I w[ould] have died. Anyway, we came back [here] and they took off my leg at St. Lu[ke's]. Then, after a period of readjustme[nt] I came back to work in the *Chroni[cle]* library."

"You also took a year off during the War and served as a correspondent in England. What happened there?"

"I was with the Royal Navy; I coul[dn't] volunteer, because of my disability, but anyone could be a correspondent. I st[ayed] in London for six or seven months, r[un]ning around mainly with the British [and] American Air Forces. I spent some [time] in the motor boat flotillas in the Cha[nnel]. I got frightened, and finally asked m[yself] what I was trying to prove. I got a [ride] home on a British World War I destr[oyer]. We went through one of the worst st[orms] I've ever been through. One night I just curled up in my bunk and figured: if I'm going to drown, I'll drown comfortably."

"You're also a trustee of the San Francisco Maritime museum. Where did you get your love of ships?"

"Well, every summer we went to Bolinas when we were kids. I was on the beach all the time. Every year, the Alaska Packing Fleet come down in August. All those beautiful ships. . . . One summer, I took off from Cal and cruised up the Northwest Passage. My younger brother, Hall, was a sailor: he joined the Merchant Marine."

"I seem to remember your having a great love for Mexico."

Scott leaned back in his chair and sighed. "Yes," he said: "there's no rat race. That's the shortest way to put it. The people are gentlemen and ladies. That

country to me . . . I've never been treated with anything but the utmost courtesy, until I get to the border and run into Customs. Immediately the Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon types put you down."

I was silent for several seconds, respecting Scott's reverie. Then, I asked him if we could get back to the *Chronicle*. "You were appointed Executive Editor in 1952," I said, "by Charles Thieriot, who succeeded his father-in-law, George Cameron, as Editor-Publisher. When you took over, your successor, Paul Smith, left the *Chronicle*. What happened?"

"Well," Scott said, "Paul was an exceptionally close friend of mine. When he first came on the paper, he built up the whole staff. But he lived a different life. For example, he had three secretaries; I could never figure out what for. Paul was always traveling; he was one of the most magnetic, gregarious men I've ever known. However, the paper seemed to suffer because it had some rather . . . it gave indications of being self-consciously self-important; I don't know how else to phrase it. The *Chronicle* had less coverage then than it now has, and a sense of humor was somewhat lacking. Unfortunately, it fell in circulation to a position of fourth—behind the *Examiner*, the *Call* and the Oakland *Tribune*—among the local papers. We had some serious operating losses. Charles Thieriot was working there then, especially at KRON-Tv. There was a serious question as to whether the paper would survive. Then, Charles became Editor-Publisher. A growing crisis resulted in Paul's leaving. We started a big trip back up; sideways, whatever term you use, until today we are the largest daily in Northern California. I don't say that with any feeling of personal pride—the fight's over. I was a born competitor and I loved to fight journalistically. But I don't want to talk about our competition—although you may notice I still use that word."

"What were your plans for the *Chronicle?*"

"I wanted it to be the greatest paper in the country. The whole thing is the men and women who write it, edit it and put it together, line by line, trying to make it more informative. And, hopefully, more entertaining as well. I love to promote things; many of us have a touch of P. T. Barnum. I enjoy getting people to read the paper, that's all."

"Did you have a philosophy about the paper?"

"Well, I sometimes think the *Chronicle* is like a barker in front of a tent, saying: 'hurry, hurry, hurry; the girls are just about to take off their clothes." The people get inside and they read a story about Viet Nam. Seriously, I will say that if a person reads the *Chronicle* he will be better informed than if he reads any other newspaper. We try to give more stories, shorter ones. Most papers I know, with the exception of about five, their only function is to decide whether to use the United Press or A.P. story. But I'm opposed to *machine journalism*. Soon there'll be one paper in this country, with different names, and what amounts to thought control."

"Your opposition to machine journalism; this means columnists?"

"Yes. To me, a columnist, a good one, is a very special thing. Frustration is what kills more people than anything else, when they have to conform. Give a man his head, respect his dignity and he'll do a job for you."

"You seem to have a special feeling for Lucius Beebe."

"Lucius; ah, he was one of those rare men who could write a sentence no other man could. One of the great non-conformists of our age; that spirit has given us a certain success. He knew what he was doing, the same as Bill Buckley: he's too smart to believe what he says, but he says it so beautifully it's effective. And, a lot of people would like to believe it."

"What about the *Chronicle* stunts?"

"Well, I've been a participant if not the author. Some I've inspired; some I've just accepted. But I spend my time trying to sell the paper. My main function is trying to get to the mail on my desk. I never go out to speak, and never go through any of this routine of a pseudo-pillar-of-the-community figure. My job is here, working under Charles Thieriot, a very intelligent and gracious man."

"One last question: What has been your best moment on the paper?"

Scott sat forward, leaning on his forearms. "It's hard to sort them out," he said. "The day the *Examiner* was through was the day Herb Caen came back to work for the *Chronicle*. He was a first baseman and I used to catch on a team. We were good friends; when he left us, I told Herb there would always be a first baseman's glove hanging on a peg for him. One day, I guess he got a touch of nostalgia. The day we passed the *Examiner* was about the third day Bud Boyd was in the bush; nobody could ever prove this, but I'm positive of it. We had a hell of a fight, but we beat them. Gradually, most of the good writers became part of the *Chronicle*. The men who run the paper—Charles Thieriot, Managing Editor Gordon Pates, Stan Arnold, News Editor Bill German, City Editor Abe Mellinkoff—we've been together for years. We know instinctively how each other thinks. If we wanted to, we could probably go on and on, if we all don't drop dead in the next few days."

I left Scott's office feeling good about our interview. He had been, as I expected, typically modest about himself and his role at the *Chronicle*. But I thought I knew him better than ever before, and knew I was on my way to an interesting story. I was also rather amused, for I felt the story behind my story was interesting as well.

Jon Newhall and I graduated from Cate in the spring of 1959. Scott delivered our commencement address, on the function of education in a free society. Although I attended Stanford with Jon and Tony, I didn't see much of the Newhalls during college. It was not until I had graduated from Stanford and started writing in San Francisco that I became fascinated by their father again.

I was then working on an article for *San Francisco* covering the history of the *Chronicle*. Like many local armchair editors, I once thought the paper was overly-commercial and rather crass compared to the Eastern dailies. But the more I read it, the more I came to believe that the *Chronicle* was one of the most entertaining papers in the country. I respected its voice in community affairs. And I knew that one of the loudest voices of the "Voice of the West" was Scott Newhall's.

I also knew Scott's role in the *Chronicle* success story. When he and Charles Thieriot began to direct the paper, the *Chronicle* had less than 150,000 readers. Yet, in the next ten years, when most metropolitan dailies were increasing their circulation by one percent annually, the *Chronicle* was doubling its readership. When it merged with the *Examiner* in 1965, the *Chronicle* had long since passed its competition in circulation and was still pulling away.

Scott, I decided, deserved much of the credit for this success. Under Paul Smith, the *Chronicle* had been a somewhat self-conscious copy of the New York *Times*. It had a sedate tone and stressed international news. But under Thieriot and Newhall's direction, the *Chronicle* became fun. Scott swung at his competition like an editor out of San Francisco's frontier days. He emphasized personal journalism

and developed such columnists as Art Hoppe, Lucius Beebe, Count Marco and Charles McCabe. He created the *Chronicle* Features Syndicate and Foreign Service. And he authored or approved a series of publicity stunts and far-out stories, including the Emperor Norton Treasure Hunt and Count Marco's Fat Venus Contest, Bud Boyd's ill-fated adventures as the "Last Man on Earth," Jonathan Root's stories on the sorry state of the city's coffee, Art Hoppe's report of how Zambia entered the space race and George Draper's coverage of the "Society for Indecency to Naked Animals."

The stunts and stories all stressed character. They also reflected what Draper, a top writer who first worked under Scott on *This World*, called "Newhall's real feeling for the absurd." The Naked Animals series, for example, told of one Clifford Prout, Jr., purportedly president of the 38,794-member Society, and his crusade to clothe the vital parts of our pets with shorts and bloomers. For several days in 1962, the *Chronicle* ran headlines like "City Called Moral Disaster Area" and carried page one stories of Prout's adventures at topless joints and at the Fleishhacker Zoo. It followed him as he took his campaign to President Kennedy and then cabled Nikita Khrushchev for an audience to found SINA chapters in the U.S.S.R.

Ultimately Clifford Prout, Jr. was revealed to be Buck Henry, a writer on the Gary Moore show. By then, most *Chronicle* readers were thoroughly entertained. Some, however, were only further convinced that the paper cared nothing for the news. "I have always been proud of my *Chronicle* subscription," one outraged reader wrote the editor, "but I am rather dubious if you continue to feature articles on the front page about the clothing of animals, especially when world-shaking events occur at the same time—such as the two Russian astronauts who went into space the same day your series began."

If *Chronicle* readers were outraged, their reaction was mild compared to that of the *Examiner*, whose circulation suffered from every off-beat *Chronicle* story. Nothing could have pleased Scott Newhall more. He seemed to regard the *Examiner* as an evil threat to the City. He loved attacking his competition with ridicule. When the *Examiner*, with typical self-righteousness, attacked the *Chronicle* for defending the topless clubs and other "local indecencies," the *Chronicle* responded with a one-line editorial barb that was pure Newhall. "The trouble with San Francisco is not topless waitresses," the editorial read, "but topless newspapers."

Although usually sarcastic in tone, this and other *Chronicle* editorials achieved serious results around town. Over the years, they helped save the Palace of Fine Arts and the Southern Pacific commuter service from premature burial. They restored sanity in readers enraged by student demonstrators at Cal and by hippies in their own homes. They cooled the police from closing the Fillmore Auditorium as well as the topless. They kept open the Haight-Ashbury Medical Clinic. They took on BART, George Christopher's Embarcadero abortion, the bulldozers of greedy developers and the shortsightedness of the California Department of Highways.

Even more important, the *Chronicle* established a tone of liberalism in the City. It reflected and reinforced what Herb Caen has called the San Francisco consciousness: a combination of great concern over issues and a tradition of humor and fun. This consciousness, I believe, smacked of Scott Newhall.

While Scott was influencing the City through the *Chronicle*, he was also working behind the scenes on a host of projects destined to change its skyline. In 1949, a Petaluma rancher named Karl Kortum convinced Scott that the City needed a maritime museum. Scott talked to Paul Smith and the *Chronicle* assigned David Nelson, then a reporter, to help Kortum on the project. Over the following years, Kortum, Nelson, Newhall and others organized the Museum near Ghirardelli Square, found a berth for the Balclutha at Fisherman's Wharf, and urged the City and state to develop Victorian Park and Hyde Street Pier and to restore the Haslett Warehouse nearby. On weekends, Scott welded many of the models in the Museum and personally supervised the wiring of the Balclutha. He took a leading role in the restoration of the waterfront, and later urged Leonard Martin of the Cannery to create a permanent home there for pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines.

At the same time, he was active in the Newhall family concerns as vice president of White Investment and a director of the Newhall Land and Farming Company. Several years after I had visited the ranch, the Newhall firms began building a planned community, called Valencia, on their property to compete with the jerry-built tracks springing up in the Santa Clarita Valley. In 1963, Scott bought the then-weekly Newhall *Signal* and set out to give a sense of identity to the Valley. He editorialized against the John Birch Society, the school board and local politicians. And, true to form, he caused a lot of trouble along the way.

The trouble came to a climax in the fall of 1966, when the Ku Klux Klan decided to hold a rally to determine their support in California. For their site, they leased a box canyon east of Newhall. Some one hundred Klansmen and sympathizers showed up, many of them carrying guns. So did an even greater number of lawmen, reporters, photographers and Tv cameramen.

The affair got going after dark as head Klansman, a "Reverend" named Fowler, stood on a grassy knoll and harangued the crowd with cries of violence and threats of the "Jew-Commie-Nigger Conspiracy." Scott, in hunting clothes, had come out from the *Signal* with his [illegible] and was standing near the speaker. At one point, when he had the crowd well worked up, Fowler spit out, "We're the superior race; and the superior race don't want no niggers!" Scott fired back, "The superior race doesn't use double negatives."

From all reports, the crowd could have killed him then. Fowler screamed, "If they're any white niggers here, get 'em!" A group of rednecks pushed toward Scott, yelling, "Get a rope!" But Scott stood his ground. Jon, Tony and [illegible] shielded him from the front, and Chester Howe, the *Chronicle* Military Editor covering the rally, stood behind Scott, protecting him with his body. "I had my hand over his heart," Howe said later. "It was beating perfectly regularly. The man was utterly unafraid."

Finally, the press saved the day by crowding in to find out who Scott was. "I am Scott Newhall," he told one reporter. "I am Executive Editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, Publisher of the Newhall *Signal* and a drag racer—class D, modified. I dropped in to listen to this unfortunate and pathetic bunch expressing themselves in uncivilized language, like children in a pissing contest. Most of them seem to be unsuccessful middle-aged deer hunters and high school dropouts. My family has live in this valley for one hundred years. And if there's anything I detest, it's bad grammar."

The Klan incident convinced me once again that Scott was a highly unusual man. Nevertheless, few San Franciscans knew who he was or what he had done. This was to Scott's liking, for he shunned publicity, rarely granted interviews and preferred to work in the background. He had few confidants: his friends were contemporaries at the *Chronicle* or men who shared his hobbies—coin collecting, building dragsters and restoring vintage cars. Some people knew he had won the 1961 concours course D'Elegance at Pebble Beach with his 1930 Mercedes he restored. Others reported he had garages full of car and engines in the East Bay. To most people, however, he remained a mystery, obviously enjoying the myths put forward to explain him.

I have never cared much for myths, but I do love a good mystery. So, after my *San Francisco* piece on the *Chronicle* was in, I decided to dig into Scott Newhall's character by interviewing many of the people who knew him best. I wanted to find out who Scott really was, and what lay within his enigmatic facade.

My first research stop was the main branch of the Public Library, where I looked Scott up in *Who's Who*. Next, I went to the California section and read *The Newhall Ranch*, a history of the ranch and family written by Ruth Newhall. From it, I learned that Scott was the great-grandson of Henry Mayo Newhall, who was born in Saugus, Massachusetts, in 1825. Henry left home at thirteen on a ship bound for the Philippines and sailed through the Golden Gate in 1850 on board the Pacific Mail steamer, "Panama."

In San Francisco the elder Newhall built an auctioneering firm into the H. M. Newhall Co., became a director of Southern Pacific, and put his profits into six California ranchos. The largest was the Rancho San Francisco, 49,000 acres of black Angus cattle land in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. Before his death, he moved to the rancho and offered to build a station for the Southern Pacific if it would route through his land. This and a sister station became the towns of Newhall and Saugus.

After Henry Mayo Newhall's death in 1882, his five sons incorporated their 50,000-acre legacy into the Newhall Land and Farming Company and the White Investment Company. But, by World War I, the once-vast empire was thinned by taxes, mismanagement and falling crop and cattle prices. The Newhall family was thinning out as well; of Henry Mayo Newhall's grandchildren, only two, Almer and Edwin Newhall, Jr., were active in the family firms. The Newhall Land and Farming Company might have collapsed entirely had not Atholl McBean, who married into the family, assumed control. The H. M. Newhall Co. prospered under Almer Newhall, Scott's father, but was hit hard during the Depression. When Scott reached manhood, little was left of his father's fortune; his inheritance was a small share of stock in his great-grandfather's declining empire, a fraction of what it might have been.

This served to place Scott in historical perspective, but I needed more background information before I tried to interview him. So, I talked with Frances Moffat, *Chronicle* Society Editor. She told me that Scott's parents were both socially prominent, but that he and Ruth cared little or nothing for the social world. They liked to give large parties at their home in Berkeley. Mrs. Moffat said, and Scott once attended all the night Giant games. However, following his heart attack nine years ago the Newhalls hardly go out.

Other sources in San Francisco said that Ruth Newhall was very important in her husband's life. When he was growing up in San Rafael, Scott had quite a reputation as a "troublemaker" and "wild child." He was a heavy drinker, and people thought he might turn out "bad." He eloped with Ruth, once a Terman Wonder Child, who worked with him as a writer on *This World*. Ruth seemed to direct his energy, as did his tough, loyal secretary, Dolly Rhee, the sister of Olympic diving champ Sammy Lee. Dolly was also on *This World* and called Scott "Old Dad."

Sufficiently armed with scandal, I called Dolly Rhee and arranged my first interview with Scott. Following that session, I went to see Ruth at the Newhalls' home in Berkeley. She and Scott lived at the very top of the Berkeley hills, in a ranch-style house of weathered wood and Arizona flagstone. Next to it was a shed full of cars and auto parts and Scott's machine shop. A parking area between this shed and the main house was packed with automobiles—an old Lincoln, a Chrysler station wagon, a grey Corvette and maroon Thunderbird among them. From the parking area, a pathway led to a guest house that Scott built for his mother. Paul Smith lived in the guest house for a while after he left the *Chronicle;* students were renting it now.

Before I rang the front door bell, I stood on the steps of the main house and looked out over the front lawn. Below, I could see much of San Francisco, Marin and the East Bay. Straight ahead was the Golden Gate, its rust red towers bathed in golden light. The view, I thought, was fit for a monarch.

I ran the bell, and Ruth, wearing a grey tweed suit and white sweater, opened the door. We went into the living room, where we sat and looked out on the Bay. Ruth, as I remembered her, was intelligent and strong. She showed me several products of Scott's machine shop: copper prints and lamps and brass ashtrays. I noticed two pianos in the corner and two paintings, supple nudes, on the wall. Ruth and I drank coffee and chain-smoked Camels as we talked about the house.

"We originally rented it in 1939," she she said, "when Skip was eleven months old. We had been living on Telegraph Hill. This house had been a shack for a quarry that supplied rocks for the streets in Berkeley. We finally bought it at the end of the war. Scotty added on several rooms and did the flagstone work himself."

"I remember when I was at Tahoe you used to hunt arrowheads. Do you still?"

"No, we haven't been hunting for several years. For a while, Scotty was so busy on the *Signal*."

"I've heard about your parties."

"Yes, they were something. Sometimes they lasted for days. We had wonderful people over, and always some musicians. I remember one morning Jon woke us up and said: 'The Dean is asleep under the oleander.' "

Ruth looked around the room and continued:

"It's sad, but the house is up for sale now. We've been restoring an old Victorian at Piru, near Newhall. And we keep an apartment in the City."

"What about the boys?"

"Well, Jon has been with the *Signal* since he graduated from Stanford in 1964. He's Publisher, and doing a great job. Tony went down a couple of months ago and is helping him out as Circulation Manager. You know he was in the Peace Corps after college. Skip has been with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Altadena; he's going back to Stanford next year, in math, to get his Ph.D. You ought to see them for your story."

I planned to see the boys. But first I wanted to talk with Scott's contemporaries at the *Chronicle*. On three separate occasions I met with Publisher Charles Thieriot, General Manager Gordon Pates and City Editor Abe Mellinkoff, who revealed to me the close communication that makes the *Chronicle* run.

"We have a complete understanding."

Thieriot said. "Scott knows exactly how I think." Pates, who had worked under Scott at *This World* and advanced with him every step of the way, described him as "an intuitive thinker. We are a good combination; I handle the practical end, he takes the imaginative side." Mellinkoff had been a cub reporter when Scott was working on the paper as a cameraman. "We used to cover stories together," the fifty-five-year-old City Editor recalled. "I'd trust him with anything. He knows words and has a good, impeccably English, tongue-in-cheek style. But he paints too, you know, and I think he sees things differently than most men. He often characterizes people as an artist would, as if he were sketching them."

Next, I asked Templeton Peck and Al Hyman to describe the editorial meetings that took place every morning in a conference room next to Scott's office. "Scott doesn't always come in," Peck told me. "Like every other department, we know how he and Charles Thieriot think. When he does come, quite a lot of our time is spent on the latest crises in his life. Scott will go on and on about some problem he's having with a '57 Chrysler, the ticket he got coming over the Bridge, and pretty soon we're into the complete history of the automobile.

"But he does have something to say on almost every subject, and I often take complete notes. He only writes two or three editorials a year now, but the material we write is often his words. He has a dead eye for the jugular, a complete scorn for phonies and a real sympathy for people in trouble. For example, he saw the hippies not as criminals, but confused youngsters." Al Hyman agreed: "He has an encyclopedic style. You might think he's an intellectual, but he's a practical, physical man. He speaks in the *concrete*, with specific metaphors and analogies."

I then talked with the *Chronicle* columnists. Herb Caen, who was originally hired by Paul Smith in 1936, described Scott as "a father figure and very compassionate . . . but has this quality of being a 'bad boy.' He's a great editor in my book because he leaves me alone. He's the reason I came back from the *Examiner;* I liked what he was doing and was bored with the other paper."

Art Hoppe, who was given a choice of becoming a sports or political columnist by Scott in 1959, characterized him as "a collector of people, the zanier the better. I think the secret of the *Chronicle's* success is that Newhall makes people mad." Hoppe told me. "They complain about the paper, but they can keep complaining only if they buy it every day.

"Newhall likes to cast people too. I remember when McCabe left the paper a few years ago, I suggested to Newhall that Jessica Mitford Truehaft take his place. I told him: 'She's a woman, a Communist, a member of the British aristocracy—and she doesn't know a damn thing about sports.' Newhall said, 'Fine, let's go.' Then Jessica had to go to her island for a while. Newhall asked her: 'Can you be back by baseball season?' 'When's that?' she asked. I guess that was carrying things too far."

Of all the *Chronicle* columnists, however, Charles McCabe had the most to say about his boss. The Fearless Spectator was working as a re-write man in 1959, when he was asked to do a story about a battle in Virginia City between Lucius Beebe, then Publisher of the *Territorial Enterprise*, and a local, reform-oriented clergyman. The story became a series, entitled "The Priest and the Plutocrat," that delighted Scott. "He had Gordon Pates come to see me," McCabe recalled for me over lunch at Sam's in Tiburon. "Pates asked me if I would write a sports column. I said no. Then Pates returned and asked me if I would write a sports column in which I could say anything I wanted. I said I didn't like sports. Pates said: 'That's exactly what Newhall wants.'

"Then Newhall went out and hired Beebe as well. Count Marco was a former hairdresser working for Charles Thieriot as a producer on Tv in the early days. He had gone to Alaska alone in a Rolls Royce, then came back broke and tried to see Thieriot for another job. Thieriot asked Newhall to interview him. Marco wanted to write a column on beauty tips for women, but Newhall took one look at him and knew what he wanted Marco to be."

McCabe agreed that Scott enjoyed casting people. "He gets quite petulant when you don't live up to casting, though. For example, he wants me to hate all the time. But he's a real impresario—that may describe him better than any one word. He is impossible to get a raise from—over the years we've had a series of long, inconclusive interviews. He is Mephistophelian: he brings you up and shows you the cities of the world, then he withdraws."

"What would you call the piece I'm writing?" I asked.

"Well, when things get rough at the paper, Scott's always told me wants to go down to Vera Cruz and die to the sound of marimbas. It's all called: 'The Road to Vera Cruz.' Or, maybe: 'The Poor Newhall.' You know, he comes from an old and once-wealthy family. That ranch in [illegible] hall could have belonged to him. No[illegible] only a stopping place on the way to [illegible] Cruz."

After seeing McCabe, I tried to [illegible] someone who knew Scott when he [illegible] young man, before the *Chronicle* [illegible] Finally, I talked with Harry Johns[illegible] local insurance agent who grew up [illegible] him in Marin. "I remember their ho[illegible] Johnson said. "One was the largest [illegible] county. They had another in Bolina [illegible] used to have the greatest times. Sco[illegible] a great prankster, with lots of ca[illegible] wasn't mechanical then, though. [illegible] lost his money in the Depressio[illegible] bought a load of sacks—I think in I[illegible] and couldn't unload them whe[illegible] market fell. The whole family mo[illegible] Berkeley, on the north side of camp[illegible]

"What were the Newhalls li[illegible]" I asked.

"Almer was a pleasant man[illegible] heavy, generous. His wife was inte[illegible] with a great insight into human frail[illegible] was extremely flexible and could de[illegible] any emergency and remain calm."

"Scott mentioned a brother to [illegible]."

"Yes, he had two. Hall, the y[illegible] boy, ran away to sea. Scott's older b[illegible] Almer, was a brilliant mathematici[illegible] became an engineer. But Scott staye[illegible] the family; he carried on his parent[illegible]

"Which parent did Scott m[illegible] semble?"

"His mother. She had the fac[illegible] saint. But both the Newhalls wer[illegible] They gave to several charities a[illegible] ported half a dozen people witho[illegible] saying a word about it. They wer[illegible] inely humble people."

One of the men Scott has "ca[illegible] recent years was Karl Kortum, a P[illegible] chicken rancher who had sailed w[illegible] Newhall before he met Scott an[illegible] quently became Director of the M[illegible] Museum. After meeting with Har[illegible] son, I spoke with Kortum and as[illegible] who he thought Scott Newhall wa[illegible]

"In one word," he said, "the *co*[illegible] of San Francisco. Dave Nelson [illegible] that Scott should have been Secr[illegible] State. He has that genius of brin[illegible] the best in people, of cutting to t[illegible] of a situation. You notice he uses [illegible] 'effective' a lot. He sees San Fran[illegible] a city-state. And he rules it his way[illegible]

"Have you ever come a[illegible] Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co[illegible] your research of the sailing fleets[illegible]

Kortum laughed. "Oh that[illegible] guess that's just Scott's way of sa[illegible] is a game."

"Yet he seems to be deeply serious?"

"Scott can't help but react to calls for elp. Just imagine the number of people ith problems who talk to him every day. ut he never has had the newspaperman's ormal defense, cynicism. Instead, he has eveloped a kind of detachment; he sits ck, listens and doesn't talk much. But knows exactly what's going on. He's ppiest, I suppose, in his own thoughts. t he can't stop caring, and caring will l him some day."

After visiting with Karl Kortum, I cided to talk to Scott's detractors, many whom have been burned by *Chronicle* itorials through the years. Most insisted ey "still had to do business in San Franco" and refused to let me use their mes. Their charges against Scott ranged m "using the paper to settle his dislikes" "blocking the proper commercial deopment of the waterfront," whatever t entails. Their criticism of his personly centered around the feeling one local ker expressed: "Newhall is an egoniac. He's power-mad; an overgrown, ulant child."

At the same time, many people were ical of the course of the *Chronicle* ing the Thieriot-Newhall days. *Time* gazine, for example, apparently thinks paper is a joke, and a bad one at that. a similar, yet warmer tone, columnist l Coates of the Los Angeles *Times* ed the *Chronicle* "the most remarkable ropolitan daily in the nation." In a nt column, Coates said that "instead of ning wirephotos showing the trouble in is, the *Chronicle* usually runs a page picture showing leg and bosom art. l I'm not complaining, just explaining. act, with all the trouble in the world, a d crumb of cheesecake is not too untable."

Since the *Chronicle* has no major comion in the City these days, I was hard sed to elicit criticism of the paper from cal publisher. However, Bruce Brugn of the San Francisco *Guardian* did ide a critique many *Chronicle* readers t agree with. "Here is a major newser," Brugmann said, "that spends sands for promotion, yet operates out its own Washington or Saigon aus. With a foreign service extending beyond Ferris Hartman and Anguilla. a news policy more concerned with set a bottle of Haig and Haig on the room table then calls a press conce, than with the Candlestick Park dal, the capture of the P.U.C. by the ies or by shenanigans in City Hall. you recall when the *Chronicle* last did d investigative story? The will to put great newspaper, what Ken Stewart's study of journalism history called 'easily the worthiest paper on the Pacific Coast, ended with the going of Paul Smith and the coming of Scott Newhall. The will to put out a good competitive paper ended when the de Young heirs decided to kill their independent paper of one hundred and four years and merge it with the *Examiner* into the San Francisco Newspaper Printing Co."

Having heard from his detractors, I went to interview Scott at the *Chronicle* again. As in my first interview, I was more interested in his character than the charges against him. He had on the same blue suit and was sitting at his desk, eating an orange, when I came in. Between bites, he asked me:

"Why are you doing this piece? Do you need a job?"

"No." I answered, sheepishly. "I think you're an interesting man, that's all. Now I'd like to ask you about music."

He looked me in the eye. "You really want to know about music?"

"Uh huh."

He smiled and slipped into an interview mood.

"Well, let's see. Music has always been a source of great solace and pleasure to me. I play the piano—badly; I'd even hate to call it piano playing. While I was at Lawrenceville, I used to go to New York on weekends and sit in with the Negro combos at the Orpheum Dance Palace at 42nd and Broadway."

"Who are your favorite musicians?"

"Well, I like all music. But the three greatest musicians who ever lived, bar none, are Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines and Art Tatum. In every horn that's blown today, there's a little Louis. In every piano, there's a little bit of Art Tatum."

"Is that why you helped promote the Cannery deal for Earl Hines?"

"Yes. I'm trying to set a pattern so musicians who get old and their fingers won't work will have a place to go. I never wanted to see it happen to Earl as it did to Fats Waller, who died in an upper berth, alone."

"What about your painting?"

"I was a lousy painter, so I bought a camera and went into the newspaper business. I'm doing nudes now; I guess I'm in my Freudian stage."

"Who are your favorite authors?"

"My favorites are all dead. I have shelves of historical novels. After World War II, Herman Wouk's *Caine Mutiny* was the last good novel, except *Catcher in the Rye*. That was one of the best American novels ever written. I don't read much now, though, but when I do, I like Evelyn Waugh and Bernard Shaw."

"How about politics?"

"I have none. I hate politics. I'm just trying to leave the world a little bit better than I found it. I'm a registered Republican, if that means anything. But, I don't vote a party line."

"Religion?"

"It's something you live or you don't. I only go to church in foreign countries, where it's part of the culture. Here, it's deteriorated into such hyprocrisy. I don't pay much attention. We're trying to develop a religion writer at the *Chronicle* who will write about religion. Unfortunately, he's all hung up on Christianity."

Scott started to riffle through some papers in a drawer of his desk. He seemed totally preoccupied as he continued talking to me:

"You know, I went to Presbyterian Sunday School when I was a child; I joined the church at my mother's request. My great-grandfather, a minister, founded the Seminary at San Anselmo. I don't regret one moment of it now because I learned a great deal from the experience."

"Do you write many editorials these days?"

"No, not at the *Chronicle*. I used to at the *Signal;* one was to impeach President Johnson. And I offered to pay Senator Murphy's expenses to North Korea when he said we should take the *Pueblo* back. No, I like writing editorials about airline stewardesses or whatever bugs me. They wouldn't fly flags at half mast in a Newhall school for Martin Luther King, so I chewed their ass on that score—I *really* chewed their ass for the bad manners."

"After the *Chronicle* and *Signal*, Scott, what are your favorite papers?"

"Well, the Washington *Post* is fairly self-conscious, but a good paper. They get carried away with their importance. The LA *Times*, if it didn't have the problem of trying to find enough copy to string around its ads, shows signs of being a good paper. The Midwest papers are living thirty years ago. Unfortunately, most papers are getting mechanized, boring. And papers don't intrigue me as much as writers do."

Scott stopped rummaging through the drawer and began to thumb through the magazines piled on his desk. I assumed he was still listening, and asked him about the many pets he has always had.

"Yes," he answered, into a magazine, "I love all kinds of animals. They're all different. As a child, I was particularly fond of cats because nobody else seemed to want them. I could always talk to cats. Pancho is a very real person, with delightful moments of aberration. One pet I really enjoyed was a mongoose we had. But as I get older, I don't have time to give the animals all the affection they need and deserve."

"Other than San Francisco, what cities do you like?"

"Well, Hong Kong, Canton, Rangoon, Peking, Denver—it should be our capital—Singapore, Calcutta, New Orleans, lower Manhattan, parts of Boston, Florence, Copennagen, London, Edinburgh, Oaxaca. There are few great cities left in the world; they're all Terra Hautes with a Hilton and a pancake house."

"You mentioned several cities in the Orient. Is it a favorite part of the world?"

"Yes, I'm convinced the Orient will inhabit this planet in a due length of time. I've never been treated ungraciously there, or been spoken to rudely. The people are ladies and gentlemen."

"I hate to use the word, but do you have a *mission?*"

"I want to see the newspapers continue. They're the only guarantee of a free communication in our English society. Great newspapers have taken the place of the pulpit; a great newspaper is the conscience of a people."

Scott sat forward and scowled. His eyes became bluer, his face sadder as he concluded:

"You know, my life has been dedicated to watching people screw up because they refuse to listen. We have to educate the American people—gently, with compassion—to the fact that they are not infallible. There's going to be a lot of trouble in this country; we are on the brink of what may be a complete disaster. There's an absolute lack of motivation: ask most people what they want and they'll say a new Mustang. The country is in desperate need of a leader with the charisma of F.D.R. People are trying to make sense of a senseless world . . ."

His voice trailed off. After several seconds, he looked at me.

"God, you've caught me in a pessimistic mood. But I do have hope. I'm so impressed by the young; they are much smarter than we, so much better educated, better grounded. I have hopes . . ."

Scott's biggest hopes, I knew, were Skip, Tony and Jon. After I left his office for the second time, I decided to see the twins. A week later, I flew to Burbank and met Jon at the *Signal* building in Newhall.

The *Signal* offices showed Scott's handiwork everywhere. In the reception area was a long, wooden bar and two silver cash registers from a gold rush saloon. The paper itself was a *Chronicle* in miniature, with local news sandwiched between Count Marco, Adeline Daley, Hoppe, McCabe, Dr. Miller, Art's Gallery—and Tiffany Jones. Above the masthead was "Our Amazing Planet," a column written by Ruth, highlighting the day's absurdities.

Jon's office was crowded with old desks, some covered with silver coins. On the wall was a painting of a nude woman with orange hair, sprawling seductively on a red, velvet couch. A fan served as her *cache-sexe*. In her left hand, she held an orange. An ocelot played at her feet. Through an open window painted behind her, orange groves stretched toward a distant mountain.

According to an inscription on the canvas, the woman was Dona Roxana Scott y Del Valle, 3rd Duquesa de Valencia. A bronze plaque, in Spanish, told its story. I asked Jon to translate it for me.

"She was a great, great, great grandmother on my father's side," he said.

"When was she painted?"

"Well, as you can see, the painting is very, very old. It was done, oh, I'd say about 1965. The story behind it was made up two days earlier."

"Did your father paint it?"

"No, it was done by Bob McClay, who did the portrait of Lucius Beebe in my father's office."

"It looks like your father is trying to impart a little historical consciousness to the Santa Clarita Valley," I said. "From the tract houses and bowling alleys I saw on the way in, it could use a sense of history."

"Yes," Jon said. "He's trying to link it with Spain. But we don't call it the Santa Clarita anymore: its *Valencia*. The locals are convinced my father is a carpetbagger and that the name-change drive is silly because the Newhall Company owns Valencia. But we attack the development when they compromise on their plans."

"So the townsfolk don't like the big-city editor?"

"A lot of them don't. Art Evans is here: he ran the *Sentinel* here when my father bought the *Signal*. Evans took out after our editorials, which were designed to challenge the concept of this as a rural community. Our philosophy was to ignore him, but Evans got more and more jealous. Finally, my father wrote a front page editorial challenging him to a 'duel' to repeat his allegations in public."

"What happened?"

"Well, Evans didn't show. He folded three weeks later, in January, 1966." Since then, Jon told me, the *Signal* had changed from a 'controlled circulation' weekly given away free to a combination controlled and paid newspaper with over 12,000 readers. Jon, who had always physically and mentally resembled his father, was clearly carrying on Scott's fight. I was amazed by the parallel between the generations of Newhalls: Scott had been the middle, favorite son and had stayed with his family; Jon, the middle son by ten minutes, was doing the same. Knowing that he had not seemed interested in the newspaper business at Cal or Stanford, I asked him if his role on the *Signal* was Scott's idea.

"He never pushed me," Jon said, "but I do seem to have his same sense of mission. I can't help thinking he had me in mind when he started the paper. Hell, I had nothing else to do."

"One more thing, Jon. I have been trying to decide what the most important event in your father's life was. Losing his leg seems to be quite significant; I could see him roaming the world if that hadn't tied him down. Do you agree?"

"Yes, I think so. He was a good athlete, a baseball and tennis player, when he was young. I know he developed his mechanical knack after he lost his leg. But I think the most important event was in the Depression, when he realized he wasn't going to have any money. Before that, he only wanted to be a playboy. You remember me at Cate? Well, my father was twice as wild when he was my age. He had a still at one school and was selling whiskey. The way he describes it, he wasn't kicked out for having the still, but because his prices were too high. I remember another story, I think he was at Webb or Lawrenceville. Anyway, there was a student assembly, for readings, after dinner. My father came late one night; his seat was in the first row, and he had to walk down the aisle. The kids in the front had their legs up, blocking his way. So he just stood there, in front of everybody, and bellowed, 'Make way for King Newhall.' "

I stayed in Newhall that night, and went with the twins to a church meeting called to discuss segregation in the community. The next morning, Jon asked me to write a *Signal* story under the byline of Nigel Rigsby, religious correspondent, urging local whites to confront their growing racial crisis.

Tony Newhall drove me to the airport in one of his mother's cars. On the way, he asked me what I was going to write when I ended my odyssey. I told Tony I thought his father was a real artist who, instead of exploring the world as he might have wished had instead created a world of his own. He could have handled any profession if he took life, and himself, seriously. He reminded me of Konchis in *The Magus*, who was a brilliant psychologist and puppeteer. Fortunately, I said, he seemed to channel most of his manipulative energy into words and into his hands.

Tony agreed: "Yes, he's usually got something in his hands. Lately, when he talks with people in his office, he fixes up Tiffany Jones' cleavage with a white paint brush and black pen. It's an English strip, you know, and the American distributor censors the originals. But the *Chronicle* and the *Signal* show her as she was meant to be."

I told Tony of my research into the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co. He laughed, then said:

"The Irrawaddy seems to be getting out of hand. In the past few years, my father's been talking about writing Sir in his office?"

"No, my mother did that. She's in the painting, too. You know, Waldo is her maiden name. Lovelock is a town in Nevada where they used to hunt arrowheads. And Scott is my father's mother's family name."

"What's that animal in the painting?"

"That's Pancho, our coati-mundi."

"And that cannon in the corner of his office?"

"Oh, that. My father tells some people it came from the 'Burma Queen.' Actually, a friend gave it to him. It was last used to hold up grave markers in a Chinese cemetery in Manila. Say, is Sir Waldo the star of your story?"

"He was going to be. Then I saw the Duchess of Valencia . . . Now I can't decide. Do you know who he really is?"

"No, I guess I really don't. If you find out, you'll have quite a story."

Tony dropped me at the airport, and I boarded my plane. I thought about the Newhalls during my flight home, and when I reached the City, I decided to stop my search for the "real" Scott Newhall. Wherever I went, whomever I talked to, I saw yet another facet of the man.

Besides, my approach was wrong. It is Scott's nature to keep the world, and perhaps himself, guessing who he really is. Furthermore, he isn't any one human being. He seems to have become—and to have lived through—many people. For example, he is Emperor Norton and Clifford Prout, Jr. He is Herb Caen, with his love and plans for San Francisco. He is Art Hoppe, hurting while he laughs, a pro at popping balloons. He is Lucius Beebe, haughty and non-conforming. He is Count Marco, ribbing the women he needs. And he is Charles McCabe, a Fearless Spectator to an often-absurd world.

Scott is also his son, Jon. He is his great-grandfather, Henry Mayo Newhall, who made it big in a state that knows few bounds. He is Dona Roxanna Scott y Del Valle, seductive and sly, with a woman's ability to make men perform. He is Sir Waldo Lovelock Scott, proud, impeccably English in morals and style as well as grammar, born to control the city-state of San Francisco, if not Rangoon.

As citizens of this city-state, we are perhaps lucky that Scott Newhall couldn't afford to be a playboy and that the *Mermaid* never made it past Acapulco. Her skipper and the newspaper he steers have given us some wondrous, if not always newsworthy, fantasies over the years. And he has been a father-figure to quite a few writers, including me.

Now that much of his fight with the *Examiner* is over, the lack of competition could drive Scott to move permanently to his Southern California domain. In fact, he and Ruth have just sold their Berkeley home and are spending more time between their City apartment and Piru.

But I doubt that Scott will ever make it to Vera Cruz and the marimbas. There's bound to be some trouble—to start or to settle—along the way. □

BERKELEY FELLOWS AT U.C. SATHER GATE MEETING
MAY 23, 1969

Inevitably, the hour comes when those who have been nourished by a great university must do all in their power to return in kind the gifts which were bestowed upon them.

All of us are Berkeley Fellows of the University of California. This we all regard as a singular honor, granted us by one of the great universities of human history. We are here as individuals to help and to heal. Our lives were immeasurably enriched by our association with the University when we were students or young professors. This campus opened new windows in our minds and souls -- so that for all our lives we must live in gratitude and debt to this greatest of universities.

I think first of all I should introduce myself. My name is Scott Newhall. I am the great-grandson of the founder of the San Francisco Theological Seminary across the bay in San Anselmo; I am also the great-grandson of a young man who came to California to look for gold a hundred years ago. Our family has been distinguished by going bankrupt in each generation. I assure you, I have carried on this noble tradition in very good style. I could mention some other miscellaneous facets of my life. I have been a working newspaper man, for example, for 34 years and shall probably die with a pencil or at least an eraser in my hand. Incidentally, three years ago, I held the Pacific Coast drag race championship in C Class dragsters, and I am currently the holder of the San Francisco Bay steamboat race championship. Both of these last two endeavors I hope will continue for some time to come.

I should like to introduce my colleagues, all of whom are Berkeley Fellows. Some of them are Bay Area businessmen and professional men

of international repute. Some of them are the men who help sustain the University of California as faculty members and who taught us all we know. First of all, there is

CLAUDE HUTCHINSON, former mayor of Berkeley and emeritus professor of Agriculture, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Vice President of the University.

DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, Chairman of the Executive Committee and Director of Levi Strauss and Company; Member of the Board of Directors of American Trust Company; National Ice and Cold Storage Company; member of the Industrial Welfare Commission; graduate of U.C. in 1913. A long-time San Francisco philanthropist.

JEAN CARTER WITTER: Partner in Dean Witter and Co., investment banker; Director of I. Magnin and Co., Yosemite Park and Curry Company; Campaign Chairman of the San Francisco Community Chest; Chairman of the Red Cross War Fund campaign (1945 to 1946); past president of the Investment Banker's Association of America; past president of the California Alumni Association; former Regent of the University; graduated from California 1916.

RAYMOND JAMES SONTAG: emeritus professor of History, U.C. Berkeley; B.S., University of Illinois, 1920, A.M., 1921; Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1924; Litt.D., Marquette U., 1959; former instructor and professor at the University of Iowa, Princeton University; at U.C. Berkeley 1925-65; chairman of History department there 1939-41; Sidney Hellman Ehrman professor of European history at Berkeley 1941-65. Chief of German War Documents Project, Department of State 1946-49; author, editor of several books, mostly on modern European history.

GEORGE R. STEWART, historian and author; A.B., Princeton 1917; M.A., U.C. 1920; Ph.D., Columbia 1922; author of numerous books from 1922 on: Sheep Rock, 1951; U.S. 40, 1953; American Ways of Life, 1954; The Years of the City, 1955; The California Trail, 1962.

STEPHEN C. PEPPER, former chairman of the Department of Philosophy at U.C. and of the Department of Art; Mills Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity, Departments of Art and History; former professor of aesthetics; specialty, aesthetics.

DONALD H. McLAUGHLIN, U.C. 1914; University of California Regent 1951-66; Dean, College of Mining, U.C., 1941-42; Dean, College of Engineering, 1942-43; director, Western Air Lines, Wells Fargo Bank; director, International Nickel Co. of Canada; chairman, Homestake Mining Co.; director, San Luis Mining Co; Emeritus Professor of Mining at U.C.

CHARLES L. CAMP, emeritus professor of Paleontology, U.C.; former curator of amphibians and reptiles at the Museum of Paleontology, U.C.; world-famous authority on fossil amphibians; zoologist; African explorer.

JOEL HENRY HILDEBRAND, chairman, Dept. of Chemistry, U.C., 1941-43; dean of men, 1923-26; dean, college of Letters and Sciences, 1939-43; dean of the college of Chemistry, 1949-51; called the dean of American Chemistry teachers; noted authority on the chemistry of solutions.

JOHN L. SIMPSON, retired Vice Presdient of Finance, Bechtel Corp.; alumnus of U.C. Berkeley, 1913; active in Belgium American Fund, Counsel on Foreign Relations, World Affairs Council, and the Foreign Policy Association.

EWALD T. GRETHER, Dean of U.C. School of Business, 1947-1961; director of U.C. survey group, old age research; appointed director of the U.C. Institute of Industrial Relations in 1952, succeeding Clark Kerr; economist (1948) of the National Security Resources Board; a professor of economics at U.C. 1939; acting dean of the college of Commerce there in 1936 and selected the most popular professor of Economics there that year.

RAYMOND T. BIRGE, Emeritus professor of Physics at Cal, and long time chairman of the department. Birge Hall at UCB is named in his honor.

Not present but endorsing this statement was Mr. GARRET McENERNEY II, attorney, McEnerney and Jacobs; U.C. Alumnus '31, Boalt '34.

As all the world knows, these are not tranquil days on the Berkeley campus. There has been violence and bloodshed. Military troops and weaponry have convinced most of the world that a state of anarchy exists unchecked in the shadow of Sather Gate.

The picture of a helicopter spraying tear gas on our campus is a thoroughly repugnant scene. That is why we are standing here today.

The pictures of rioting students, their friends and disciples, are equally damaging in the eyes of the world. It is true that a major part of the provocation has come from non-students. The Berkeley Campus of the University of California has become a political battle-ground of considerable magnitude. Goodwill, learning and the rule of reason have become battle casualties.

We are here today to plead for the honor and integrity of the University of California.

What we seek is peace. No University is ever tranquil. In the long history of education of civilized man, the universities of the world have constantly been the seat of change. What we ask, however, is that the change take place not by violence in the streets--but by reason in the classroom in the minds of students and professors.
A University such as California represents an unbroken thread of the expanding human mind which began centuries before the Golden Age of Greece and has continued through Athens, Rome, Bologna, Padua, Crakow, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale and Princeton--and other centers of the intellect too numerous to mention here.

It represents the power of the human mind as exemplified by the great men who have used logic, reason and thought to build a better and a richer world for all.

The University of California must be removed as an arena in which students, faculty and political administrations alike are the implements of self-centered factions.

The students should be heard--but within the academic walls of reason--not by angry shouts.

The administration, in turn, should continue to listen to the faculty and should be given a chance to establish here in Berkeley the most gifted teaching assemblage ever gathered together, in any place--at any time. There should be a sensible and continuing colloquy among the students, faculty and the administration.

As Berkeley Fellows, we have no administrative power, we have no public purse with which to threaten or cajole.

We are here to ask that the students, the faculty and the administration protect their own priceless University. We are here to ask that non-students do not use this great institution as a whipping boy, and to ask the same thing of any and all citizens of the state of California.

We pray that the University may be spared from further depredations and that we may humbly assist our great school in rebuilding the fire of reason and intellect that, during recent months, has been flickering.

Saga of a Venus in a Fat Trap

She was fat. She was thin. Now what is she?

BY MICHAEL ROBERTSON
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Where is the Fat Venus?

Do you know her? Has she taken you into her confidence and shared the poignant memories of the women who envied her and the men who desired her? Will you guide us to her?

There are so many questions we would like to ask.

Thirty years ago the cities by the bay thrilled and then despaired as the saga of the Fat Venus played itself out on the pages of this newspaper. A kind of modern Cinderella, she was singled out to realize her dream of escaping the cocoon of flesh that enveloped her beauty. She was bullied and rewarded, coaxed and cosseted, denounced and celebrated. At last, she was triumphant. And then she disappeared into anonymity, the scorn of her creator ringing in her ears.

To begin at the beginning, once there was a Chronicle columnist named Count Marco (originally Mark Spinelli of Pittsburgh, Pa., and not, in fact, what you might call a *genuine* count) who gained fame and fortune by pointing out the many things that were wrong with the women of San Francisco.

He wrote columns advising women on how to undress in front of their husbands and how (once undressed) to share a frisky bath with those same husbands.

Women were not precisely sure that Count Marco was their true, dear friend. (He was, of course.) One of the things he did was to pick out a woman of wholesome if plain appearance, put her onstage at a local theater and dress her up and paint her up until she seemed the acme of fashion.

A Professor Higgins

But Count Marco was a kind of artist. He asked his editor why he should stop at the surface of the skin. Why couldn't he take a woman fully, perhaps even exuberantly, fleshed, and wring her down into the perfect woman?

On Oct. 16, 1960, the full-page newspaper ads announcing the contest appeared, illustrated by a drawing of the Venus di Milo considerably inflated around the hips.

Entries poured in. Count Marco selected "3,563 pounds of overweight beauties . . . from a field of entries whose weight totaled a magnificent 41¾ TONS!"

In November 1960, 18-year-old San Franciscan Mary Anne McGrath was chosen to be the Fat Venus. She weighed 253 pounds. Actually, she had gone on a crash diet and scaled down from 275 merely to give her the courage to enter the contest on its last day.

Today, exclusive to the Chronicle, Mark Spinelli, the quondam Count Marco, reveals the secret of Mary Anne McGrath's selection: "I liked her legs."

She was the prototypical fat girl with a pretty face. A high school dropout, she lived at home and cared for her half-brother and half-sisters. It was the prize at the end of diet that attracted her: A Columbia Pictures screen test in Hollywood.

The pounds dropped from Mary Anne McGrath's body as the months dropped from the calendar. In late April, she broke the 200-pound barrier. In May, she began voice and dramatic training. During the summer she was offered tutelage in the art of womanly charm from top San Francisco models. Each week, she repaired to the Chronicle for measuring and weighing.

Impugning Womanhood

The city, agog at the count's latest caper, held its breath. Indeed, for a Fairy Godfather, Count Marco delighted in sowing the seeds of skepticism. He doubted that an American girl could submit her willful self to his strict regimen. Give me a daughter of Europe, he had said. Give me an *Italian*, and you will see something.

But each week the press accounts boasted of the Fat Venus' weight spiraling ever downward. Then, in January, the scandal broke. "What Shall We Do With a Female Judas?" the headline declared.

"I believed, and I was betrayed," the Count's story began. "I have no liking to admit it, but see what the Fat Venus has done to me and you. See how she has repaid my kindness and patience with feminine guile. Are all you American women alike? Can not a one of you be trusted?"

It was a tale of horror. Sometime in November the Fat Venus had slipped from her diet into the swamp of lies and deceit. Girdles and brassieres cinched so tight they drew blood concealed her failure from the tape measure. The abashed personnel of "the special office of the Fat Venus project" (as the count described it) were forced to admit the truth. Each thought someone else was weighing Mary Anne McGrath.

The count was not inclined toward mercy. "Mary Anne was weak," he wrote. "She had not the strength to resist what you call French fries and strawberry malteds. And word comes to me she sneaked candy bars. So I decree that because of this weakness the diet and Mary Anne are no more."

But perhaps the door was not closed so firmly as it seemed! A ballot appeared in the newspaper asking Chronicle readers whether or not the Fat Venus should be given another chance.

Mary Anne McGrath begged the public to understand. She admitted she was a "traitor, a real Benedict Arnold." Ballots poured in. The count announced that the public had spoken. (Today, the count is more than a little evasive about just what the public said.)

Former Chronicle columnist Count Marco and his Fat Venus, Mary Anne McGrath. He liked her legs.

PHOTOS BY THE CHRONICLE

Spirited away to a mountain farm, Mary Anne McGrath reappeared as 'whistle bait' a few months later, new dress size 12 from 26.

Again, the battle was joined. In late 1962, the moment arrived when McGrath had no more to give, though a good deal more to lose. Gagging on the act, the count "was forced to beg a woman." With her consent, the newspaper spirited her away to a mountain farm and posted a 24-hour guard.

On Jan. 7, 1963, the astonishing photographs consumed the pages of the Chronicle. There was Mary Anne McGrath in a low-slung bathing suit of the purest white, basking poolside, accepting lustful homage from a blond-haired beach boy.

"Whistle Bait," the caption read.

A Great Loss

Her measurements had managed the precipitous descent from 47½-41-52½ to a provocative 38-26-38. Her dress size had dropped from 26 to 12. She weighed 145 lbs., the perfect upholstery for her statuesque 5-foot, 10½-inch frame.

In December, the Fat Venus had flown to Hollywood. In her own words, Mary Anne McGrath described her feelings. "I was born again," she said. "Suddenly — and miraculously — I was Cinderella, dressed all in gold, and stepping on to a Hollywood sound stage for a

Count Marco's comments at his moment of vindication had a dour tone. Rather than exulting, he fretted. He seemed unable to forget the betrayal of the previous year, "a betrayal that by comparison would make Delilah's look like a friendly gesture toward her poor Samson."

The words he finally uttered were terrible: "I hereby predict that within six months Mary Anne McGrath will be as fat as ever, if not fatter. For you see, I know you American women all too well. But I hope in this one instance Mary Anne will prove me for the first time to be wrong."

The predicted six months later came the final chapter in the saga of the Fat Venus. Mary Anne McGrath had sued the Chronicle in small claims court, contending that she was owed $200 for the two weeks she was confined to her country hideaway during the final effort to pinch the weight away.

Photographers were waiting as she left the courtroom.

"She covered her face with a scarf when her latest pictures were being taken," Count Marco reported, "but as my experienced eye roved over the coat I perceived that she is once again fat, fat, fat."

There, abruptly, this peculiar variation of the old story of Pygmalion and Galatea came to an end. Count Marco, now a plump old gentlemen in his 70s, says his greatest creation seemed to drop off the edge of the world.

So, there it stands — a brilliant promotional gimmick that may (or may not) have been a small-scale tragedy. Only the Fat Venus can tell us that. During her two-year odyssey, which words were hers and which were drawn from her? What is her side of things? What was truly gained, truly lost?

Where is the Fat Venus?

San Francisco Chronicle, February 18, 1990

Los Angeles Times

8 Part II / Sunday, August 14, 1988 / F ★

'I am scared to death that the editorial side of that paper will become secondary to the advertising side.'

Attorney Daniel Hon

Even Enemies Mourn Exit of the Newhalls From Namesake Paper

By STEVE PADILLA and MAYERENE BARKER, *Times Staff Writers*

Word traveled quickly when the influential Newhall family announced last week it had quit the Newhall Signal, the scrappy newspaper that has recorded life in the Santa Clarita Valley under the family's reign for 25 years.

Jim Ventress, executive director of the local Boys and Girls Club, recalls his telephone jangling the morning the news hit. "I got five or six phone calls." Everyone asked: "Did you hear about the Newhalls?"

The fuss is understandable. With the Newhalls at the helm, the paper had become the local voice of the valley as it grew from a suburban outpost to a growing, bustling extension of Los Angeles.

Consider: Santa Clarita might not have become a full-fledged city in 1987 had the Signal not blazed the trail with persuasive editorials, cityhood proponents say.

Consider: A plan to put a hazardous-waste facility near the valley's drinking water wells might have gone through in 1970 if the feisty paper had not rallied opposition.

Consider: Everybody who is anybody in the Santa Clarita Valley has had a coming out in the paper's longstanding gossip column. As one devoted reader says, "You really hadn't arrived until you got your name in Mimi's column."

But all that is gone. Last Tuesday, chief editorial writer Scott Newhall, 74, his wife, Ruth, 78, the paper's editor and anonymous author of Mimi's column, and their son Tony, 47, the publisher, abruptly quit the Signal. The resignations came after a long-festering conflict over finances and stock ownership with the paper's absentee owner, Morris Newspaper Corp. of Savannah, Ga.

The changeover shocked a community where, one recent survey showed, 88% of the residents polled read the Signal, even though some said they took its information with a grain of salt. With outsiders overseeing the newspaper's transition, many are concerned that the Signal will no longer be able to cover local issues knowledgeably. Others are certain the Signal will lose the edge that in the past has galvanized the valley's residents.

Questions About Future

Few know what to expect from the Signal's new management, but former editors and executives of Morris Newspaper Corp. said the company's papers elsewhere lack the brand of chutzpah that has been the hallmark of the Signal. Like many small newspapers trying to avoid alienating advertisers, they sometimes play it safe.

Moreover, the former employees said, Morris Newspaper Corp. brings to its investment known for its consistency a history of frequent staff turnover, both in its executive

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and reporter ranks. For the first time in a quarter of a century, the local paper will not be run by locals.

"It's another reminder that we're not a small community anymore," said Barbara Okronick, a Valencia resident.

"I am scared to death that the editorial side of that paper will become secondary to the advertising side," said Daniel Hon, an attorney and longtime friend of Scott Newhall. "It will become a great loss to the community if that is allowed to happen."

The Morris chain operates 39 newspapers nationwide, the largest of which is the Signal, with a circulation of 40,000. In California, the chain also runs the Ceres Courier, Willows Journal and Manteca Bulletin.

A former executive who worked for the company for nine years, Bill Camp, said the newspapers are not flashy and suffer from high turnover that he attributes to low wages.

"It's a chain that has a tendency to go through their people rather quickly," agreed James G. Marshall, city manager of Ceres, a town of 18,000 near Modesto. Marshall said the Ceres Courier, one of two Morris papers he is familiar with, covers local issues well but does not stir much debate.

Of the Willows Journal, 26-year-old editor Joe Hudon said, 'We're nothing real special." The Journal circulates 3,000 newspapers weekly in Willows, a Northern California town of 4,900 residents. A three-member staff puts out the paper, Hudon said.

Darell Phillips, publisher of the chain's three Northern California papers, is not surprised by such assessments. "You've got to remember this is a chain of small newspapers," he said. "The papers act as training grounds for young reporters, and low salaries for rookie reporters are to be expected."

Phillips, who will assume duties as interim publisher of the Signal on Tuesday, said there are no plans to reduce the staff or change the 77-year-old paper's editorial posture, as some have feared.

If that's the case, reporter Sharon Hormel predicted, the Signal will remain much as before. "Things will stay the same. The Newhalls have hired a staff of

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reporters who think as they do."

But readers agree there is no way to duplicate the highly personal voice of the Newhalls, who edited their paper in a manner befitting the highly opinionated and rabble-rousing publications of the 19th Century.

Fulminating Editorials

Gone, it seems, are fulminating editorials under banner headlines such as "Sugar and Spice and a Knee in the Groin" or "Big Rigs Won't Stop/Throw the Bastards in Jail."

Family patriarch Scott Newhall, who formerly was editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, had become a legendary curmudgeon in California journalism with those outspoken front-page editorials. He once called the state Legislature "a whining, lying, groveling gang of sneak thieves."

"I would imagine the paper would continue but be a little more conservative," said Santa Clarita City Councilwoman Jo Anne Darcy, whom the Signal once called "the handmaiden to the Ayatollah." It was the paper's way of saying she serves as an aide to Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich.

"I think the paper will lose a certain spirit that pervaded the whole group out there that was engendered strictly by the Newhalls," said Jim Foy, executive director of the Greater Los Angeles Press Club. In March, the club honored the Signal for best overall news coverage by a weekly or semiweekly newspaper.

Friend Worries

Connie Worden, a longtime friend of the Newhalls and a Santa Clarita planning commissioner, said she worries about the future of the Signal.

"I think one of the strengths of this valley has been the Signal," she said. "Because of its colorful nature, everyone reads it. Scott has had the most provocative editorials. As maddening as some of his editorials have been, they are always thought provoking. They've punctured a few of our balloons, but it was good for us."

Joseph R. Schillaci, who as president of Magic Mountain has come under occasional attack of the editorials, called the Newhalls "an integral part of the valley's personality. Some people will miss them, and everybody will remember them."

But for all its fans, the paper has plenty of detractors.

"There are probably a lot of people who are glad (Scott) Newhall walked," said Camp, the former Morris executive and now general manager of Live Oak Publishing Co. in Northern California.

Okronick said she, like many readers, enjoyed the paper and editorials but found some coverage overly dramatic.

"We enjoy the Signal," Okronick said. "We say, 'Read the Signal, and then discard about 50% of what it says as far as being factual.'"

Her remarks echo findings of a recent public opinion poll of valley residents that was commissioned by the Santa Clarita City Council.

The poll of 400 households, conducted randomly by telephone, found the Signal was the valley's most widely read newspaper. About 88% of the respondents said they read the paper often or sometimes.

But the Signal also has received the lowest marks for quality. Almost 50% of those polled said the paper was poor or fair, and 11% gave it an excellent rating. The poll, released last month, had quizzed Santa Clarita Valley residents on subjects ranging from newspaper readership to traffic to the City Council's performance. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

Used to Criticism

Scott Newhall was used to such criticism. He once said the Signal helped unite the Santa Clarita Valley's diverse communities by being the kind of paper everyone hated.

Despite its enemies, the newspaper always has been able to rouse the community into action and sometimes change the course of events.

Worden recalls that in 1975 a group of residents began mustering support for cityhood. Ruth Newhall convinced them that instead of forming a new city, the Santa Clarita Valley should break off and form a new county.

The drive to create Canyon County made it to the ballot twice, but was rejected both times by voters in other parts of Los Angeles County. Eventually, the paper backed cityhood, and Santa Clarita became a separate city in 1987. Now, many credit the Newhalls for throwing their support behind the idea.

"Our valley will be much poorer without them. They have been strong contributors to this valley," Worden said.

New Editor

Against that backdrop, interim publisher Phillips said his first concern is to find a new editor. Editorial control of the paper will be local, not dictated from corporate headquarters in Savannah, he promised.

"The only thing I'm not allowed to do is change the masthead and raise the price," he said.

As for the Newhalls, local leaders and readers are sure they have not seen the last of the family, especially Scott. After all, this is the man who, when threatened with a libel suit for describing the local trucking industry as the "Southern California Panzer Division of Murder Incorporated," brazenly reprinted the editorial in full.

"In the back of my mind, I just can't see them stopping," Darcy said. "If they don't come back quickly, it'll be the biggest loss this community has known."

Scott Newhall, great-grandson of pioneer land baron Henry Mayo Newhall, said that after spending about 50 years in journalism, he plans to stay in the business but has no definite plans. When asked whether he had considered starting another newspaper, he said, "Now that's an idea."

"I wouldn't be surprised if Scott doesn't decide to start a newspaper," said state Sen. Ed Davis (R-Valencia) whose wife's family initially sold the paper to the Newhalls in 1963. "They'd better worry about Scott coming in and competing with them."

When Newhall sold the Signal to Morris in 1978, Davis said, there "was a clause in his contract that he could not start another paper for a certain number of years . . . that clause ran out three years ago."

Angry Newhalls Launch Own Pap

By STEVE PADILLA and MAYERENE BARKER, *Times Staff Writers*

A newspaper war is brewing in the Santa Clarita Valley and a legendary California editor and his wife, both in their 70s, are preparing to fire the first shot.

Scott and Ruth Newhall, descendants of pioneer valley settlers, confirmed Monday that they plan to launch a weekly newspaper to compete with the Newhall Signal, the paper they edited for 25 years until their surprise resignations last week. The family quit after a long-festering conflict over finances and stock ownership with the paper's owner, the Morris Newspaper Corp. of Savannah, Ga.

"At my age, I must be crazy," said Ruth Newhall, 78, of starting the yet-unnamed weekly.

As she did at the Signal, Ruth Newhall will edit the weekly. Her husband, family patriarch Scott Newhall, 74, will serve as publisher and editorial writer. Their son, Tony Newhall, 47, who was publisher of the Signal, plans to go into the computer business and will not join his parents at the new paper.

Their announcement means that Scott Newhall, a legendary figure in California journalism, will continue with the distinctive, fulminating brand of newspapering he practiced for 20 years at the San Francisco Chronicle before he became publisher in Newhall.

Colorful Editorials

Newhall, for instance, has written front-page editorials calling the Legislature "a whining, lying, groveling gang of sneak thieves," and characterizing the San Fernando Valley as "a heaven on Earth for winos, dog poisoners, child abusers, husband swappers, wife beaters, porno stars, bill jumpers, street racers, defrocked priests and street-corner bordellos."

The paper's banner headlines were no less provocative: "Sugar and Spice and a Knee in the Groin," said one. "Big Rigs Won't Stop/Throw the Bastards in Jail," said another.

During the turbulent 1960s, the Signal was the only newspaper in California to run a UPI wire photograph of then-Gov. Ronald Reagan discreetly making an obscene gesture as protesting students at UC Berkeley booed and hissed at him.

"The Signal has not been bashful," Ruth Newhall said.

Word of the Newhalls' intention to start a competing newspaper in Santa Clarita, a fast-growing city north of the San Fernando Valley, was no surprise to Morris Newspaper Corp. officials.

"We thought they probably would," said Darell Phillips, a Morris employee who will supervise the management changeover at the Signal, which expanded in June from three days a week to five. "They had mentioned that possibility.

"The Newhall Signal does a good job," said Phillips, publisher of the Manteca Bulletin, a Morris newspaper in Northern California. "Basically, with competition from the Newhalls or without, we'll just do the best job possible in the area."

Ruth Newhall said she and her husband have already rented office space, have begun interviewing prospective reporters and circulation and advertising personnel and hope to have their first edition published in three or four weeks.

Scott Newhall is the great-grandson of Henry Mayo Newhall, a pioneer land baron who put together the 37,000-acre Newhall Ranch on which the planned community of Valencia is being developed. Independently wealthy, Newhall served for two decades as editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, where he became famous for his colorful and uninhibited practices.

Ruth Newhall also is a pioneer journalist. More than 50 years ago she was a police reporter for the Chronicle—a rare beat for female reporters of the day.

The Newhalls' return to journalism does not surprise loyal readers. After all, this family, when threatened with a libel suit for describing the local trucking industry as the "Southern California Panzer Division of Murder Incorporated," brazenly reprinted the editorial in full.

What *did* surprise Santa Clarita residents was the Newhalls' resignation from the Signal, which they purchased in 1963.

Jim Ventress, executive director of the local Boys and Girls Club, recalls his telephone jangling the morning the news hit. "I got five or six phone calls." Everyone asked: "Did you hear about the Newhalls?"

the brand of chutzpah that ha been the hallmark of the Signa The Morris chain operates 3 newspapers nationwide, the larges of which is the Signal, with circulation of 40,000.

Phillips said there are no plans t reduce the staff or change th 77-year-old paper's editorial pos ture, as some have feared. Editori control of the paper will be loca not dictated from Savannah, h promised.

"The only thing I'm not allowe to do is change the masthead ar raise the price," he said.

But for all its fans, the Sig under the Newhalls had plenty detractors.

Valencia resident Barba Okronick said that she, like ma readers, enjoyed the paper a editorials but found some cover overly dramatic. "We say, 'R the Signal, and then discard ab 50% of what it says as far as be factual,' " Okronick said.

Few know what to expect fro the Signal's new management, it former editors and executives of Morris Newspaper Corp. said e company's papers elsewhere lk

If that's the case, Signal repor Sharon Hormell predicted, "Thi s will stay the same. The Newh s have hired a staff of reporters wo think as they do."

But some change is inevitable

"I would imagine the pa r would continue but be a little m e conservative," said Santa Cla a City Councilwoman Jo Anne D cy, whom the Signal once ca d the "handmaiden" to the "Aya lah." It was the paper's way of saying she serves as an aide to os Angeles County Supervisor Ne Antonovich.

Editorial:

Privileges and Responsibilities Of the Free American Press

Late this week the Morris Newspaper Corporation of Savannah, Georgia, the present owners of The Signal and a chain of periodicals scattered across the country, sent its lawyers into court in an attempt to hamper the start up of this new newspaper in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The Morris Corporation is apparently convinced that the founding of a fresh and vigorous SCV publication would unfairly jeopardize the virtual advertising monopoly now enjoyed by the Signal. In particular, the Morris attorneys sought — and succeeded in obtaining — a court order under which Tony Newhall, The Signal's former publisher, may not initially participate, in any form whatever, in the production, circulation or editing of our new twice-a-week community paper.

The Citizen shall certainly comply with Judge Miriam Vogel's decision, but we pray that in future court proceedings at the end of this month, at which time further and more detailed pleadings will be submitted, the restraints placed upon Tony Newhall may somehow be relieved.

In the meantime, with the thought that such a document may be of passing interest to our readers, we are reprinting below a memorandum discussing the true meaning of the American free press. This memo was written 20 years ago by the then owner and publisher of the Signal.

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Letter To My Son On The Responsibilities of Publishing The Newhall Signal
Date: January 1, 1968

Dear Tony:

Here are some random notes concerning the typical problems facing the publisher of any newspaper -- large or small.

Most of the following observations are a matter of opinion. They are not necessarily eternal truths; they simply represent one newspaperman's (at times) highly prejudiced and perhaps mercurial views of the ingredients necessary to produce a successful publication.

IN GENERAL

1. The single most important element of a successful newspaper is its almost mystic relationship to the readers it serves. As human beings, readers tend to identify with their newspaper much as mariners at sea find comfort in a lighthouse. A successful newspaper should give its readers a feeling of security -- not smugness. It should provide them with a stimulant -- not a soporific. Any newspaper will eventually fail if it plays the role assigned by Karl Marx to religion -- "the opiate of the people."

EDITORIAL

1. A true newsspaper possesses a utterly real personality. Worded differently -- a living newspaper presents a consistent and forceful social attitude in its editorial department. I do not mean to say here that every department nor every story nor every paragraph must be a slavish recapitulation of the paper's sociological views. But

As publisher of The Signal, you must decide what the main stream of your newspaper is to be and never let yourself yield to the temptation of compromise and expedience, and flounder around inconsistently.

If you are going to be liberal, be liberal.

If you are going to be moderate, be moderate.

If you are going to be conservative, be conservative.

But, no matter what your paper is going to express -- express it with consistency and force.

2. A publisher who considers his paper to be primarily a business undertaking is a fool. If a publisher compromises or ignores or is oblivious of the true meaning of his newspaper, he may die rich but he will not die respected by his thoughtful fellow newspapermen.

area of news coverage from radio and, more particularly, television. If you abandon your dedication to the written word, you will be abandoning your readers to the light and shadow world of television stations -- which exist solely at the pleasure of the government and which therefore are exposed to official control in varying degrees of subtlety.

Newspapers, although privately owned, are granted a precious cloak of immunity against such government control. Newspapers receive this magnificent gift from the people of the United States though the Constitution. In return, publishers must never fail in their devotion to preserve the freedoms of our American society.

ADVERTISING

1. Never allow advertising policy to dictate your newspaper's behavior.

2. The editorial staff should cooperate with the advertising department intelligently and with integrity, since the members of your sales staff are continuously exposed to criticism -- many times unfair or inaccurate.

3. Your sales representatives must be enthusiastic, personable and, if possible, possess a sardonic benevolent philosophy that will insulate them from their daily harassment.

2. If you find yourself in the position of publishing what is essentially the only newspaper in a community, your responsibility to publish the opinions of all your readers is far greater than if you are publishing in a "competitive" area.

3. As you know, it has always been my conviction that, even though they may be privately owned, newspapers must assume the same responsibility toward their readers as do the clergy, the bar of justice and the doctors of the world.

4. Again, ideally, if you find yourself in the position of publishing the only substantial and, hopefully, successful newspaper in a community, you are enjoying a privilege granted to you by the United States Constitution. You do not possess the tyrannical power of a despot.

Newspapers -- particularly because they are becoming fewer in number -- have become increasingly more important as the only real protection a free people have against the rise of dictatorships. Therefore, no matter who owns the corporate stock, your newspaper belongs spiritually to its readers and is responsible for their well-being.

Most publishers in the United States have no real understanding of their role as a priesthood of knowledge and communication among people. I hope you will never forget this grave responsibility you have assumed. (Obviously, I have no real doubts about your comprehension of this concept.) Nevertheless, I assure you that any paper that chooses to reject this pledge of allegiance to its readers will surely die along with the freedoms that have made this country perhaps the most remarkable social force yet developed on this planet.

5. Despite the fairly reflective tone of the preceding paragraphs, these concepts can make the difference between a publishing failure and a publishing success.

And now to some of the specifics concerning The Signal's operation.

3. Newspapers, which are the final resort of free thought and the exchange of ideas among peoples, must reflect the convictions of their publishers. They will disappear the day they degenerate into an intellectual slum of news pulp wherein their editors simply fill up empty space around an advertisement or devote themselves to saying what the publishers think their readers want to hear.

4. A true newspaper must be a leader, not a follower.

5. Never attempt to cheapen the editorial and news content of your paper. Fine newspapers are produced by gifted men and women, and their talents should be fairly rewarded. Machines can replace human hands, but they cannot replace the human mind.

It is my opinion that the editorial employees in newspapers throughout this country are disgracefully compensated in terms of the creative contribution they must make to our society.

Whenever it is necessary to effect savings in your operation, let your study of the editorial department budget be last.

6. Perhaps my deepest attitude toward newspapers is my devotion to the concept that good newspapers are part of the world's treasury of literature. They are not merely daily recitations of alleged "fact" written to the garbled prose that has become known as "journalese." Each edition of a fine newspaper should, ideally, constitute a contribution to the world of letters. The written word is still man's noblest achievement in this business of climbing the ladder of human history.

Now, if you are successfully to fulfill your publishing responsibility, each edition you publish will stimulate the flow of thought among your readers. Where the editor encounters illiteracy, he must serve as a missionary who will somehow teach illiterate men to read and to think about great ideas.

7. You will find ever-increasing competition in the

4. Above all, they need the often-repeated support of the publisher and general manager, in order to compensate for the beating that they take as they wend their weary way from store to store.

5. Always remember that a good newspaper is not in the business of selling advertising; it is in the business of making a profit for its advertisers.

If a client does not benefit through his advertisements in your newspaper, then he is foolish to continue the advertising campaign.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

1. The most important element here is that the production staff of a newspaper be completely loyal to and enthusiastic about their own newspaper. It is imperative that they take a real personal satisfaction in creating the best possible graphic product. If they are sloppy or don't care, they will debilitate your newspaper.

2. Your circulation staff must have immense pride in your paper so that they will make it their business to see that every household receives good service.

3. In my extremely strong opinion, the basic function of the circulation division is the distribution of your newspaper. If you have the best newspaper in the world and nobody reads it, you are lost.

4. Never be afraid to increase your circulation rates simply because an inferior or venal would-be competitor has debased the value of his own product. If your newspaper is better than any other, then it should command a higher price than any other.

And finally, I wish to express my sincere respect for the manner in which you are handling The Signal.

Scott Newhall

A RAZOR'S EDGE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SCOTT NEWHALL

BY ELLIOT BLAIR SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK HANAUER

Scott Newhall's pale blue eyes blaze like an acetylene torch. He leans forward. "I wish you wouldn't get involved in this," he begins, his aristocratic tenor rising like mission bells before a gathering storm. "Because it's going to be a bitter one," he says, "and we're going to kick hell out of you."

Hell hath no fury like this scion of wealth and privilege, to whom the grand sweep of California history belongs. At issue this evening, over an elegant dinner in the shadow of the Tehachapi and Santa Susana mountains, amid the manzanita, oaks and desert scrub, is an old-fashioned newspaper war that pits a landed family against powerful corporate interests: Scott Newhall, 74, and his crusading San Francisco brand of journalism against contemporary standards of profitability and objectivity—"the clatter and clang," he says, "of today's branch-office style newspaper publishing."

To be decided as well may be the fate of the surrounding Santa Clarita Valley, the immense dry riverbed just 30 miles north of Los Angeles, whose ancient tributaries cut deep canyons into the earth and which are filling rapidly anew with the furthest outreaches of Southern California's urban sprawl. In his thundering front-page editorials, Scott Newhall often boasted that the bloodlines of Tombstone, Abilene and Bullfrog, NV, ran through this "grand and noble valley." But it is no longer the Old West's final outpost. Now, he fears, Santa Clarita is becom-

California Publishing's Brilliant Barnum

ing just another enclave for the wealthy and comfortable.

"I thought there was a chance we could work things out," sighs a pained Darell Phillips, a representative of Georgia-based Morris Newspaper Corp. who is the unfortunate bearer of Newhall's wrath. Phillips, 53, is a burly, bearded man who accepts the angry outpouring because he owes his position with Morris to Newhall. And because he makes it his business to get along wherever he goes. Phillips publishes Morris' six Northern California newspapers in Manteca. He is strong, competent, conciliatory. But amid this electrical storm, he is lost.

Scott Newhall is angry because 11 years ago he was forced to sell a controlling interest in his small country newspaper, the Newhall, CA, *Signal*, to Charles Morris, a soft-spoken Southerner he has come to revile. Deep operating losses and a family dispute cut him off from the funds he needed to carry *The Signal* through to its heyday now. As his newspaper's most visible asset, Scott Newhall stayed on over the years to run the show, his baroque front-page editorials appearing in their customary place above the fold. But a 10-year non-compete clause has finally expired, and he has rediscovered the source of his ire: If Morris does not sell roughly 20 percent of the newspaper's stock back to his son Tony Newhall, *The Signal's* publisher, he will walk out and perhaps launch a rival publication. As the grand, elegant old man rails on, Phillips and Tony, 47, the earnest but devoted son, listen in silence.

For over 100 years, Scott Newhall's family and its corporate interests, the Newhall Land and Farming Co., have controlled this beautiful if mostly barren land, which was known to the Mexicans as Rancho San Francisco. California's first gold claim was registered here on March 9, 1842. Mexican outlaw Tiburcio Vasquez, before being captured and hanged in 1875, took refuge in the nearby Vasquez Rocks. To the northeast, Chinese coolies carved a mountain passage for Southern Pacific Co., which in 1876 connected Los Angeles with Oakland by rail. Later, California's first oil refinery arose on Newhall property as did some of the Golden State's most abundantly fruitful citrus orchards.

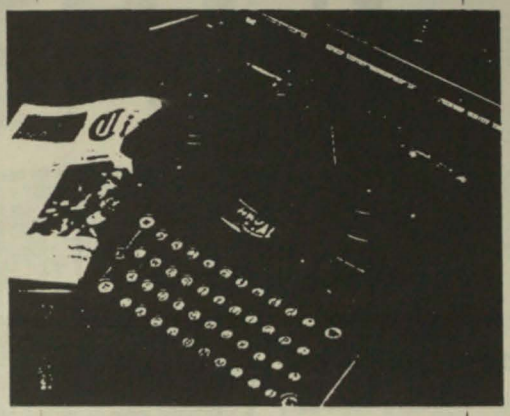
An enterprising auctioneer named Henry Mayo Newhall—Scott's great grandfather—acquired the Rancho San Francisco's dusty 47,000 acres for $90,000 in January 1875. The Saugus, MA, panhandler arrived in California with the Gold Rush, and, though finding no fortune in the hills, lucratively employed his fast-talking skills in auctioning the precious cargoes of ships that had rounded the Horn. The rancho was a remote speculation, at the time, but Newhall expected Southern Pacific's new railroad to fill the Santa Clarita Valley with settlers. Henry Newhall was, in fact, a visionary. But he miscalculated by roughly 100 years. When he died in 1882, the vast plain still lay empty.

Now the enduring traditions of Mint Canyon, Sand Canyon, Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus and Valencia are at last giving way. From the imposing Magic Mountain amusement park to the fast food restaurants on nearby "Hamburger Hill," a new order is taking hold. To better direct these forces of change, the old frontier towns incorporated themselves into the city of Santa Clarita, population 147,225, in December 1987, and city fathers are busily wringing their hands now over the rapid pace of development, the density of traffic and the scarcity of affordable housing.

"We see this valley becoming one of the great cities of the United States. We think we have a tremendous opportunity to create that here," says Thomas Lee, 46, the slight, soft-spoken but powerful chairman of Newhall Land and Farming, which controls much of the region's development through the vast remains of Henry Newhall's estate. Family members still own 38 percent of the company, including a small stake held by Scott Newhall, a Newhall Land director. But, in recent years, the fragmented heirs have ceded control of their company and its vast domain to professional management. "We have a very strong economy, related to Los Angeles, which is clearly the most dynamic city in America today," Lee continues. "We can benefit from that great economic strength just over the hill. Yet we're separate from Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, and can create something separate and unique."

Already, while many Santa Claritans drive over the Newhall pass each morning to work in Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley, many newcomers are attracted to the growing local employment base. Roughly two new corporate offices relocate in the massive Valencia Industrial Center each month. But as elsewhere in Southern California, the cost of housing is prohibitive, threatening to turn Santa Clarita into a moneyed retreat. Newhall Land, which built Valencia to its exacting standards, has just embarked on the second phase of its master-planned community. But, even though the price of entry into its paseo-style neighborhoods ranges up to $450,000, entire developments are often completely sold very shortly after the first spade of dirt is turned.

SCOTT NEWHALL'S HELL AND HAIL MARY'S



"As our beautiful valley bursts with new life we dedicate this newspaper to the ultimate challenge of the American Free Press. It will fight your fights...and shed your tears."
OCTOBER 31, 1963

"Los Angeles County is a vampire, gorging itself on a banquet of blood from weary and desperate taxpayers ..."
JANUARY 22, 1975

"We have excoriated U.S. Senators for too little legislation and too much fornication; and scolded Los Angeles County Supervisors for too much legislation and too little fornication; and cursed Sacramento Assemblymen for too much of both."
SEPTEMBER 10, 1986

"Just a brief reminder that ... nothing has changed in that Babylon of middle class sneak thieves, loafers and fornicators known as theUnited States Congress."
JANUARY 4, 1989

"For 25 years this writer served *The Signal*. It is a painful experience to sit by and watch [it] degenerate into just another chain-owned journalistic yam plantation..."
JANUARY 29, 1989

"Newspapering is a pleasure and a privilege ... the best and brightest world of all."
MAY 3, 1989

Scott Newhall, dashing and handsome, is, with his wife Ruth, 78, almost alone at the top of the old order. For 25 years, as editor and publisher of *The Signal*, he represented the contrary forces of law and disorder in a land he called Jackass Gulch. Before that, as editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, he buried William Randolph Hearst's famous *Examiner*. "He's Mencken with manners," a protégé says admiringly. In Santa Clarita, Scott was powerful and iconoclastic enough to often tilt against the family land company, which at times ran roughshod over the community. And he brought to the backward canyon country a bold, outlandish style of leadership perfected in the gilded corridors of old San Francisco.

But the crusading front-page editorials that made Scott Newhall loved and feared over a career spanning 50 years ultimately felled California publishing's brilliant Barnum. The beginning of the end came more than 20 years ago, when Newhall family patriarch Atholl McBean withdrew support for a $125,000 loan that Scott needed to keep the leaky *Signal* afloat. McBean, chairman of a Newhall Land and Farm predecessor, White Investment Co., concluded he'd felt the sting of *The Signal* editorials too often and vowed to make his nephew pay.

Scott tried to maintain the publishing venture out of his own pocket. But his fortunes were tied to family interests, and those interests were tightly controlled by the ancient McBean. Not coincidentally, after the crusty patriarch retired in 1968, the Newhalls took the land company public through a limited stock sale, forever removing it from the whims of hot-tempered mavericks the family had in seemingly endless supply. Unfortunately, for Scott, the damage had already been done. In 1972, a newspaper broker introduced Scott Newhall to Charles H. Morris, the publisher of small daily newspapers in Augusta and Savannah, GA, who agreed to advance him a $125,000 loan convertible to a five-year option to buy 81 percent of the newspaper. As fate would have it, *The Signal* turned its first profit five years later and Morris took control.

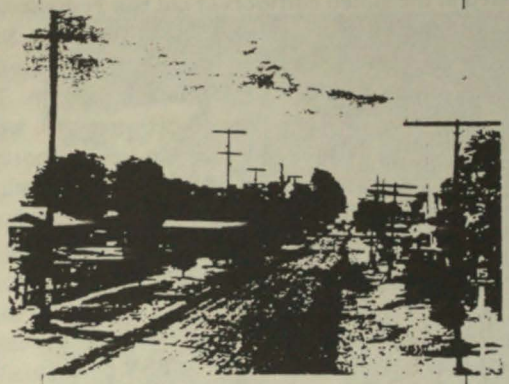
Of Morris Newspaper Corp.'s 39 newspapers, which are published in seven states and yield annual revenues of $108 million, *The Signal* is now the flagship, with annual revenues of $7 million and a pre-tax profit margin last year "in the 20s."

Charles Morris liked and admired Scott Newhall when he met him in 1972. Over the years, however, their relationship—in which Scott played the surrogate father—grew strained. The Newhalls chafed at Morris's penny-pinching, contending it destroyed staff morale. And they believe Morris cheated Newhall's

son Tony when in 1983 he acquired Tony's 19.2-percent stake in the newspaper, which represented the family's only remaining shares. Scott Newhall does not much like Charles Morris now, and doesn't mind saying so. Morris responds: "I like Scott Newhall. Let's just say I would not put myself in the position of relying on him in the future."

Scott Newhall's swashbuckling manner derives from a life of romance and adventure. He married Ruth in 1933, at the age of 19; then lost a limb chasing forgotten Aztec ruins on horseback in Mexico four years later. During World War II, he was appointed the *Chronicle*'s war correspondent in Europe. And in 1952 he was named *Chronicle* editor, making him one of California's most powerful young men. Then in November 1963, looking for new challenges, he acquired *The Signal* for $60,000 and returned to the horse trails of his youth.

Newhall, 1919. A town of noble bloodlines. A final outpost of the Old West. The town of Scott Newhall's youth.



Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

He takes a moment, then sighs, "The future has nothing to do with us."

Looking to save the dusty valley from its backward ways, Newhall railed against the corruption of elected leaders, myopic views of common folk and the steely fist of his own family businesses, contesting the "enjoyable mythology that this writer is nothing but a stalking horse for a big bad farming company that is planning to take over the whole region."

For reasons more economic than editorial in a town that could support only one newspaper, Scott Newhall challenged a rival editor in December 1965 to a duel on Main Street. "I'm Calling You Out, Art Evans," he cried in a mocking front-page editorial. The rival never showed and the town was Newhall's.

Over the years, as his newspaper grew from a small weekly to a 42,000-circulation daily, he zealously guarded his domain, calling the competing *Los Angeles Times* "that gangling, shaggy, gray mastodon of printed oatmeal porridge," and referring to the encroaching county seat as "the great, hopeless, slobbering super metropolis of Los Angeles." "He's a visionary," says Thomas Lee, Newhall Land's present chairman. "Of all the people I know, he has the greatest vision of what the city can be." But the sun is at last setting over Scott Newhall's shoulder.

Just before the end came on Tuesday morning, August 9, 1988, Darell Phillips shouldered his friend Tony Newhall aside at *The Signal* offices and asked once more: "Jesus, are you sure you want to do this?"

"No," Tony said.

"Well, I don't think Charles wants you to do this, either," Phillips said emphatically. With Scott Newhall busy elsewhere, Morris's representative still hoped to reach a compromise with *The Signal*'s respected young publisher.

Phillips felt Scott Newhall's vitriolics were one obstacle to negotiations. Another was Tony Newhall's insistence that Morris sell the stock back at its 1983 value. Under the original agreement, Morris had paid 1-1/2 times *The Signal*'s gross revenues to buy the newspaper. Five years later, Morris bought Tony Newhall's shares under the same formula for $779,186. The younger Newhall needed the money to settle a debt with his brother and to buy a house. By Phillips's reckoning, that stock was now worth $1.8 million.

"Charles was not against letting him back in," Phillips observes. "But he didn't want to give him the original deal. So I said, 'Why don't you split the difference—$1.3 million?' "

"No," Tony replied reluctantly. "It just isn't going to work. [At] 3 o'clock I'll announce my resignation to the staff."

Everyone who was there that day recalls the meeting with great anguish. But they also believe it was a watershed for a community that had grown up under the Newhalls' benevolent despotism. "It was a very emotional scene," says Phillips, who took over as interim publisher. "I came back here into my office, closed the door and called Charles. I didn't know what I was doing here." Over the next few days, Phillips received 17 staff resignations, a number that later grew to 20. "Every half-hour, somebody would come in and there'd be another resignation on my desk," he says in quiet disbelief. No one knew that just four weeks hence, the Newhall family and a dozen departed *Signal* professionals would inaugurate the competing, twice-weekly Santa Clarita *Citizen*. Its rallying cry was the Latin "Illegitimi non Carborundum," to which Scott Newhall delighted in saying: "It means don't let the bastards grind you down."

Scott Newhall launched *The Citizen* on September 11, 1988, its haphazard pages produced by a handful of *The Signal*'s former top staffers who competed fiercely against their old colleagues. Their resources were limited, their desks pressed tightly together. But they followed the Newhalls out of unswerving loyalty, taking symbolic pay cuts of $1 a week and no guarantees as to how long the 40,000-circulation *Citizen* would survive. Leading the charge, Scott termed himself a "simple, inoffensive newspaper man who goes to work late of a morning with a spelling book close at hand and a flask of Geritol on his hip." But he also plunked down $1 million to make the venture work. And for a time it did.

Ruth Newhall, a legendary former *San Francisco Chronicle* police reporter who for many years ran *The Signal* while Scott tilted against windmills, held forth in the makeshift *Citizen* newsroom. And Scott himself, after winding down for most of the past decade like an old clock, labored with renewed vigor. In a front page farewell to Morris and *The Signal*, he wrote: "How sweet to be beyond the reach of booted and spurred bookkeepers who cannot distinguish between mixed metaphors and split infinitives, and who cannot recognize a dangling participle unless it "is reposing a few inches immediately below the belt buckle." But son Tony, still bound by the terms of Morris's 10-year, non-compete clause, could not follow them. And without Tony's ability to combine the practical resources of his mother and brilliance of his father, *The Citizen* grew hard-pressed over the next months to attract advertisers or readers. "That's the single most impor-

tant problem we're faced with." Scott acknowledged one cold morning in January, shortly before his 75th birthday. And for a brief midwinter moment, the Newhall family's golden boy reflected every one of those 75 years.

Months later, one day in May, Scott Newhall abruptly walked away from his upstart newspaper, in the town named for his great-grandfather, finally accepting that his proudest hopes, his vainest ambitions and much of his wealth had been consumed by age and the flames of passion. The proud phoenix that rose from *The Citizen's* mast descended again into ash. "We decided that after a six month start-up period, we could detect the flavor of success or failure, and read the omens of the future," the grand old editor declared in his farewell. "Well, after six months the omens were not favorable. Yet as a matter of pride we carried on for two more months. ... But today, if we continued, pride would have turned to simple vanity—and vanity is not an attractive virtue."

For Scott and Ruth, who have withdrawn to a picturesque Victorian mansion amid the surrounding mountains and orange groves, the prospects are less certain. Dressed in a finely tailored blue serge suit that could be, and probably is, an antique, Scott Newhall still likes to tell of surviving that perilous horseback ride across Mexico, a steamship transit across the stormy Atlantic, the proposed duel with a rival newspaper editor, even the foiled attempt of a hired killer and the burning to the ground of his graceful mansion, which the Newhalls rebuilt even lovelier than before.

But even a life so rich in experience cannot defend itself against the impress of time. "Don't get to be my age and start a newspaper," Newhall warns. "Just don't." He takes a moment for himself, then sighs. "The future has nothing to do with us."

"At my age, you can't think of the future or make any promises," continues Ruth, whose narrow shoulders remain the iron bedposts around which Scott drapes himself. But if the Newhalls appear somehow uncertain of themselves now, not entirely convinced of their rightful places on the rugged western skyline, all they need do is look back at Santa Clarita's brilliant 20th century, which they themselves have chronicled. Until the very end, the Newhalls played leading roles in that great pageant. And even at the end, they did not go out without raging against the dying light.

Elliot Blair Smith is a contributing editor.

April 12, 1990

Dear Scott

It was nice of you to comment that I saved the waterfront, and it may be true (north waterfront), but the three big ones that Jean participated in have to be added to the equation.

These are, first and foremost, the Golden Gate Freeway defeat -- and two others. I was not involved in Golden Gate which Jean pulled off. She worked for months organizing the merchants in its path. Not easy, Walt Zolezzi of O'Brien, Spotorno & Mitchell and other difficult and suspicious people, not used to working together . . Virginia Fusco for the Marina residents, the Russian Hill Improvement Association, Nancy and Bob Katz of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers -- a monumental task ending finally in the 6 to 5 vote victory with the Board of Supervisors.

The Golden Gate Freeway, in my opinion, was the most destructive thing to hit this city (if it had hit) since the 1906 earthquake.

The other two big ones were Ferry Port Plaza and International Market Center.

Ferry Port Plaza was an island a third larger than Alcatraz that Castle & Cooke of Honolulu proposed building alongside the Ferry Building. The project would cost $110 million in early 1960's dollars. Your friend, Marion Conrad, had it nicely rolling until in a sweet, quick victory I got Herb Caen to run an item. (I had not been following it closely; Jean and Bob Katz developed the facts). The item named the room at City Hall, the date, and the time that the public could come to oppose this monstrosity. The Bay Conservation & Development Commission was conducting the hearing, but there was reason to believe that the pressure on them was making them a little shaky.

Upshot: Thanks to the Caen item not twelve or twenty disgruntled old ladies in tennis shoes showed up at the public hearing, but instead three hundred angry environmentalists. It was the first time that a waterfront constituency had gathered. B.C.D.C. took heart and killed the island.

I was always impressed that you knew I was going to get going on keeping the red bricks under Telegraph Hill before I did. The immediate threat to them was the International Market Center, said to be the third largest building in the world (floor space, I assume). It was financed by Joe Martin, head ofthe Republican party here; that consummate horse's ass, Rober Lapham, Jr. and others. Projected cost: $120 million in early 1960's dollars. Henry Adams was the promoter. It was to be a vast wholesale furniture, furnishings mart.

You will remember how these with-it fashion types foregathered for cocktails at the temporary office of the project, across Sansome from the venerable Sewall Warehouse. After cocktails the decorators were given gold-plated hard hats and picks and led forth, across the street, to peck symbolically at San Francisco's finest surviving Gold Rush building -- the real work to be done later by bulldozers. The press release outlining this ceremony you said was the most tasteless thing you'd ever encountered in this city.

Jean and I were called in, by this time with a reputation as the Saul Alinskys of the waterfront, by the people living on Telegraph Hill who didn't want to see the damned thing jammed in between them and the Embarcadero -- and neither did Jean or I.

This was a tough one; the Int. Market Center had political wallop, they had unveiled their plan at a sleek reception at the Mus. of Modern Art (traitors!) and we had our work cut out for us.

You will remember Fort Seawall, which was your idea, but they finally got the idea that if they sufficiently injured this 1854 building, our last clipper ship warehouse, we might go away.

So we harried them. I flew balloons on 84 ft. strings (the height limit there) on different street corners simultaneously, took a photograph, and later on an enlargement drew lines between the balloons. The result was incorporated in a set of oversized tabbed brochures that gave a foretaste of how this mother was going to completely shut out the view of Telegraph Hill . . much less from it.

Sent to the Board of Supervisors, sent to Mayor Alioto. Alioto used to deplore the "nut house brigades" who blocked such improvements "in the name of ecology and social progress." When he learned that I was mixed up in it he tried to get me dropped from the city's civil service rolls.

"You ate all my rice
and my stewed beef.

"And tried to have me cut off
the Home Relief."

(From a 1930s song sung by Louis Armstrong, "Do You Call That A Buddy" -- favorite record on your brother's wind-up phonograph in the fo'c's'le of the bark KAIULANI.

I was only saved by a change in administration at City Hall, Moscone in, Alioto out.

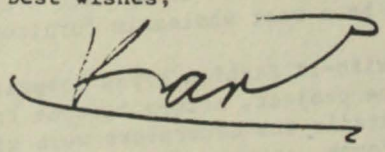
Jean got Roger Kent to go after the Market Center on their proposed street vacations, which were numerous and blatant. This legal approach was telling. Roger debating Roger (Lapham) on T.V., etc.

So . . we wore them down. They collapsed and it cost them millions. The land was sold and Levi Plaza got the idea . . red bricks.

We lost the Seawall but two superb structures were saved -- Italian Swiss and the Lombard and Greenwich Dock building, now called #1 Lombard. Also a small brick sailor's boarding house on Battery.

I appreciated the remark you made one time to John Portman: "In this city it is more important to have the Kortums on your side than the Planning Commission."

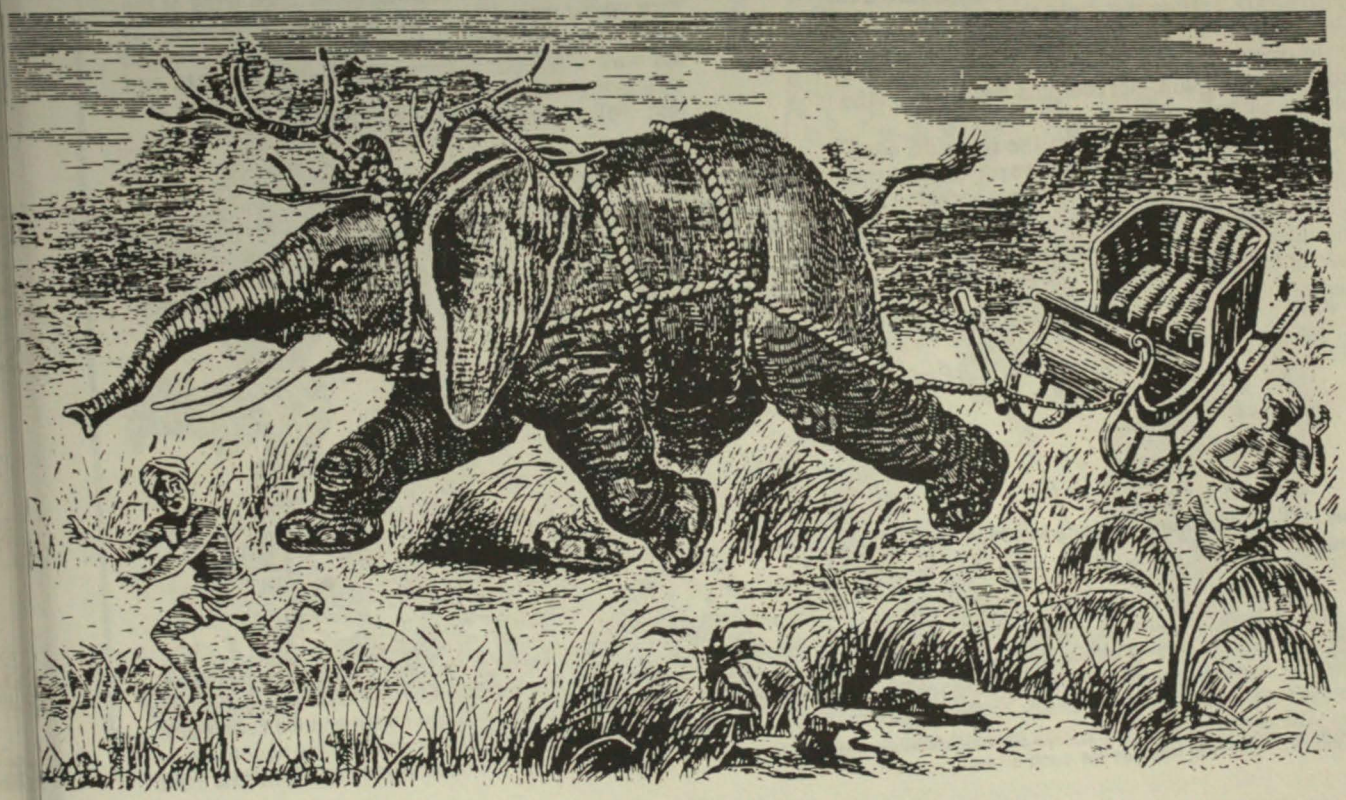
Best wishes,



P.S. Jean went to Sacramento and got San Francisco's representatives -- George Moscone, Willie Brown, John Burton, and Leo McCarthy -- to each write a letter saying that they would not support legislation that weakened B.C.D.C. in any manner or form. (John Foran refused to sign up). Later, when U.S. Steel/Ford Motor Co. wanted to build a skyscraper on the south waterfront, Jean and I did not take part in the opposition. They had already been blocked.

CHRISTMAS 1985

When "Prancer" Ran Amok Christmas Eve — 1859



From the archives of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company

From The Rangoon Times
December 26, 1859

A Rogue Elephant Scatters The Monks

From Our Correspondent

Our metropolitan police correspondent informs us that a rogue elephant was sighted in Rangoon on Christmas morning.

The Reverend Kip Soon, Abbot of the Pithaya Buddhist monastery in South Ship Street reported to the magistrate's office last night that early morning prayer services in the Golden Pagoda yesterday were interrupted and then abandoned when a stampeding elephant forced his way into the monastery compound.

The beast managed to breach the temple's outer wall and ran amok in the courtyard, trumpeting with fury, flailing his trunk and stabbing at the sanctuary walls with his enormous tusks.

According to the Reverend Soon, the monks were at their devotions inside the pagoda when the extrordinary disturbance began, and tried to continue with the rituals. But when the great tusks began to penetrate the tiled walls of the temple the brothers fled into the courtyard directly in front of the elephant.

All witnesses report that the unexpected and unwanted invader was wearing a most extraordinary harness. On his head were lashed a pair of what seemed to be banyan tree branches lopped off in the manner of the antlers of a large northern hemisphere mammal – perhaps a moose or an elk. A rope harness also trailed behind the brute and was attached to the mangled remains of a sledge of some sort. The animal did not seem to be in pain, but had obviously taken a terrible fright.

When the elephant saw a crowd of monks in saffron robes streaming out of the pagoda, he turned and galloped around behind the kitchen wing of the monastery where he upset the outhouse in which at least a dozen monks had sought refuge. He crashed his way to freedom through the kitchen gate and was last seen headed for the Irrawaddy river at a fast trot, bellowing and snorting as he went.

The illustration of the mysterious rogue elephant, which we are able to publish, was composed from descriptions given our correspondent by the Reverend Soon and his terrified monks.

Report of Sergeant Boome, Rangoon Metropolitan Precinct
December 24, 11:21 p.m.

Mr. Momat Singh, chief bodyguard and household steward to H.H. the Nizam of Lashio, called in person to complain of the theft of His Highness' favorite hunting elephant, which he described as an ugly beast with a roving eye and shifty temper. Plaintiff Singh stated that when he made his regular late evening round of the elephant stockade he noticed the gates had been forced and the comfortable stall assigned the missing brute was empty. On being questioned Singh claimed that the Nizam is a popular individual and has no known enemies. The elephant he says is a "very valuable animal", worth the "ransom of the younger son of a Maharaja". As of this date there are no clues or obvious motives for such a theft.

Report of Inspector R. Youngblood, Rangoon Waterfront Detail
December 25, 5:15 A.M.

Apprehended and detained a gang of 12 male Europeans who were sighted by the harbor police in a ship's lifeboat rowing erratically in circles off Queen's Deck. When hailed by the police they took flight and attempted to hide in the tule bank on the far side of the river. They have been identified as the deck crew of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation packet boat Bengal Princess. All of them reeked of strong drink.

Suspects were unwilling or unable to make any statement except to repeat in slurred phrases something like: "Shanta Claus -- ish coom ta tha town. God Shave Shaint Nick"

An informant at the dockside told one of the arresting officers that early in the evening he had observed these men drinking heavily at Bombay Jim's Spirit Shop, across from the Strand Hotel. They were engaged in a loud argument among themselves as to whether a single elephant could haul a fully-loaded sleigh faster than eight reindeer.

The 12 suspects are currently lodged under guard in the strong room of the transient seamen's barracks next to the H.M.'s Customs. End of arresting officer's report.

A Pair of Stage-Struck Virgins Enliven Christmas Eve — Rangoon, 1865

Fragment of a letter home from Midshipman Arthur Cleve, who had been posted as an armed guard to the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co. transports during the recent native uprising above Pagan.

The Irrawaddy Christmas Season is an awfully jolly affair, Mother, but the festivities are not always exclusively dedicated to peace on Earth and good will to men. In fact, the sense of impending social disaster hangs over all the splendid holiday balls, masquerade parties, and the annual hunt breakfast at one or another of the plantations upriver from Rangoon.

The crowning climax of the Rangoon season has always been the Colonial Club's annual Nativity Pageant, a sentimental diversion sponsored by Sir Waldo Lovelock-Scott of the Irrawaddy Board of Governors. This Biblical drama has traditionally been directed and produced by the Very Rev. Percy Wintergreen, who is the Episcopal Bishop of Mandalay and a widely-acclaimed choirmaster, whose fruity baritone rendition of "Knock Softly at Heaven's Gate" is reputed to soothe the very bowels of Burmah's King Mindon himself.

The pinnacle of social distinction, which is greatly coveted by the female members of Rangoon's smart set, is to be chosen by the Bishop for the role of the Blessed Virgin. Every unattached maiden in Burmah's colonial colony is dead set to gain this exalted post, particularly since the theatrical skills expected of the lucky Virgin are not of an exhausting or sophisticated nature. The chosen lady is simply required to settle herself sidesaddle on the back of a smallish water-buffalo heifer, which is then led back and forth across the stage of the Royal Concert Hall by "Joseph", who pauses from time to time to knock at various inn doors, seeking shelter for the night.

Well, Mater dear, it came to pass during our recent Christmastime jollification that the aimiable Bishop selected a certain Miss Agatha Runcible to be his reigning star. Lady Agatha is the second daughter of Sir Archibald Runcible, Bart., OBE, KGB, and has come over to Rangoon from Delhi for the Irrawaddy season. She has been particularly attentive to the Bishop during the entertainments and diversions of the year's end.

And it also came to pass that, upon hearing the news of Miss Runcible's elevation, a certain Miss Daisy Mae O'Leary, the lead soprano in the Bishop's cherished cathedral choir, and a secret devotee of the prelate himself, exploded with hellish fury. And, when the identity of this year's Virgin was announced at the cotillion ball at the Strand Hotel, Miss O'Leary marched up to the Bishop and charged him with "favoritism" and "creeping senility", and further accused His Reverence with having been seduced by an adventuress with neither the spiritual nor gynecological prerequisites to such a divine dramatic endeavor. Miss O'Leary then turned to her rival, who was standing at the Bishop's elbow, and screeched: "Gorblimey, Duckie, if you're a virgin then I'm the bloody Queen of bloody May!" Miss O'Leary then made a lunge for the Virgin's awesome decolletage and the fisticuffs started.

The ensuing hostilities I can describe only as "historic", and second in intensity only to the thirty-five-round bare-knuckle encounter between Paddy Tam O'Shanter, the Welsh Tomcat, and Hogshead Bill Kilgrew on board the barge off Cheapside in 1842.

Miss Runcible recovered in time to make her Christmas Eve debut to great applause. She was costumed, however, in a veil and flowing headdress in order to draw attention from her lacerations. They say that Miss O'Leary has been transported upriver for a spell of missionary proselytising among the hill tribes along the Siamese border.

My friend, Bobby McClay, the society columnist, staff artist, and roving correspondent of the Rangoon Tattler, happened to be attending the cotillion ball and managed to sketch the encounter. Bobby tells me that he sold his account of the free-for-all to the Tattler for three guineas and a season pass to the Imperial Calcutta Opera Company's pre-Lenten tour of Southeast Asia.

All is now serene on the Irrawaddy, and I hope you and Father made a happy time of it around the Christmas tree.

Affectionately,

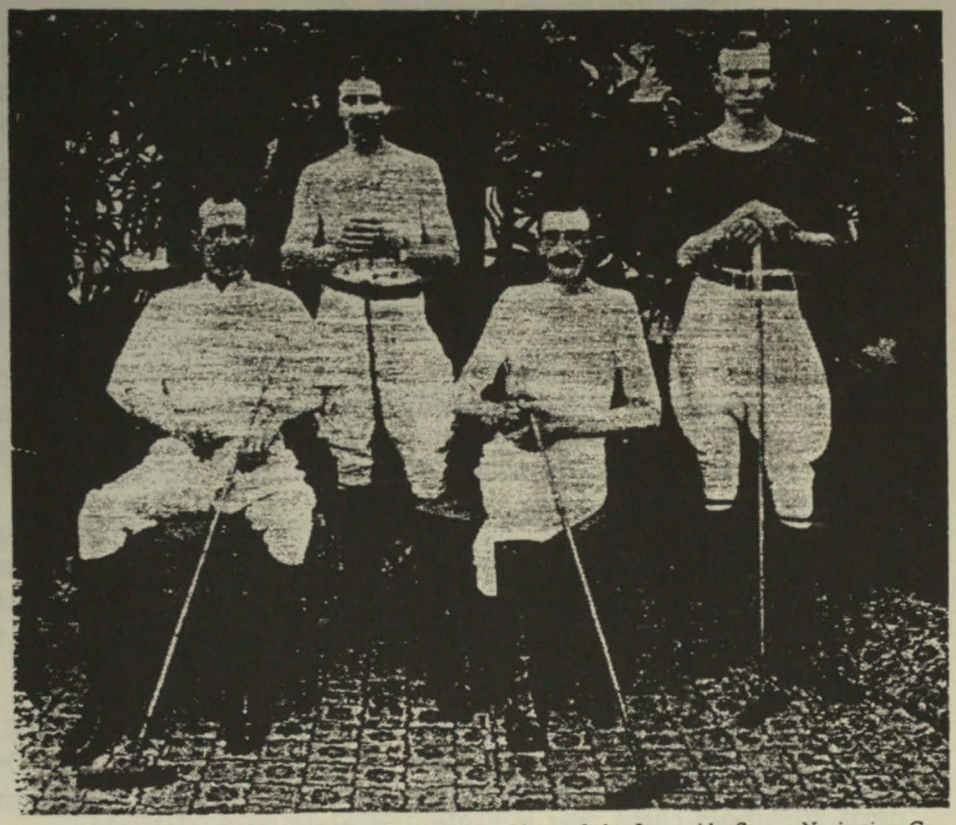
Your dutiful son,

Arthur

A note from the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company secretary:

A copy of Bobby McClay's on-the-spot illustration of the embattled virgins was presented to the Company and is republished herewith for our readers' enlightenment.

The Raj Quartette
Christmas Day Champions



From the Archives of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co.

Rangoon — 1874

Raj Quartette 43

Sponsored by the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company

Four Horsemen of Islam 0

Sponsored by H.H. the Sultan of Johore

CHRISTMAS 1988

The Raj Quartette

The sporting group pictured on the cover of this holiday greeting was recently unearthed in the discard files of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company's corporate records. It is the official portrait of the undefeated polo team fielded by the Company during the Christmas round robin games on the parade grounds on the outskirts of Rangoon.

This famous team was mustered by Sir Waldo Lovelock-Scott, himself an avid sponsor of this great equestrian sport, so enormously popular throughout the Far East. The 1874 Rangoon Quartette suffered no defeats during the whole 1874 season. Their final and most brilliant play occurred on Christmas Day, when they demolished the Sultan of Johore's formidable four horsemen with a lopsided victory, running up 43 goals and holding His Highness's team scoreless. This feat was never equalled on any polo grounds east of Suez.

The muster roll of the Rangoon Raj Quartette was indisputably the most remarkable group of polo stars ever to have saddled up during the glory years of Empire. Taken together they were rated at 38 goals. They can be identified from the cover photo as follows:

Seated at left — Sir Jonathan "Blind Jock" Perkin, O.B.E., (10 goals), for many years Colonel of The Queen's Own Rangoon Rifles. "Blind Jock" was a legend in the Burmah polo clubs. His left eye was glass, and his right eye was almost totally useless. Yet his friends swore that because of his perfectly developed sense of hearing and his sensitive nose for moving hickory balls that, when ahorse on the playing field, he could wield his stick with the ferocity of a cavalry sabre, and from the far end of the field he could crack out goal after goal with the accuracy of a field artillery rifle.

The Colonel was finally retired blind in both eyes, and passed his final years comfortably ensconced on the front verandah of the Colonial Club, polo stick in hand, taking swipes whenever possible at the passing street beggars and mango sellers.

Standing at left — Brigadier the Hon. William Barrett, Bart. (8 goals). Sir William was a younger son of the Fourth Earl of Swansdown. His career on the playing field was meteoric, and he was famed along the Malabar Coast for his splendid string of ponies. Unfortunately, shortly after the historic Rangoon championship matches in 1874, Sir William was dropped from the sporting scene following bazaar gossip that he had been involved in an irregular assignation with his favorite mare, Princess Poona.

Standing at right — Young Billy Butterfield (10 goals). Lieutenant Butterfield had been posted directly from Sandhurst to Burmah, where he served as a Guards Captain of the Irrawaddy River Watch. Billy, whose light weight and even lighter complexion earned him the title of "Gallòping Ghost of Rangoon", was actually high scorer during the Christmas championships. Following the breakup of the Quartette he was gazetted to the 22nd Royal Sappers stationed along the Pathan frontier.

Seated at right — Major Watkins (10 goals), who was something of a mystery figure in the purlieus of Rangoon society. This person was never addressed by any given name, being known throughout the Orient only as "Major Watkins". The Major was a great favorite with the ladies, and was always ready, when pressed, to oblige the diners at the Colonial Club weekend dinner dances with a spirited performance of what he described as the Mandalay Two-Step, during the execution of which he would take off the boot on his left foot, wave his red toenails high in the air, hop about the ballroom on one foot, and finally make his exit backwards through the pantry doors.

Major Watkins departed Rangoon immediately following the Christmas championships. He was last heard from riding on the back of a very large parade elephant, heading upriver along the banks of the Bramaputra. He told a passing spice merchant he had been invited for some grouse shooting and a jolly good chinwag with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

ANOTHER SPLENDID YEAR
on the
LOWER IRRAWADDY

Annual Report
Submitted by direction of
The Board of Governors
Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company

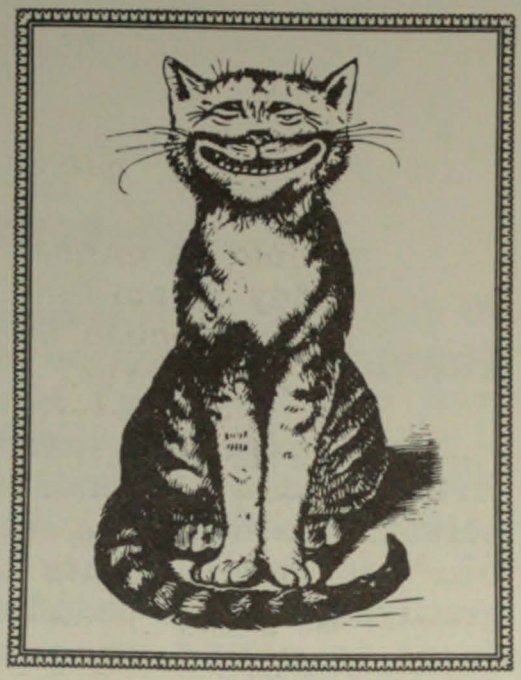
Foreword

It would be unrealistic of us to suggest that the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation company has been completely untouched by the political tumult and corporate travail that have afflicted the world during the past twelvemonth. This has been a year of astronomical public debt, soaring international trade deficits, and crumbling national frontiers in Europe. We have suffered global drug wars, revolts and rebellions in once-peaceable nations, oil spills in the virgin wilderness, guerrilla skirmishes in the inner cities; devastation by the terrible forces of Nature, and, in the home, tighter household budgets and looser family morals.

Yet we are proud to report that your company, continuing its fine tradition, has been steadfast in adversity, implacable in integrity, and relentless in its pursuit of economic amenities. We have not flinched in the face of continuing corporate mergers. unfriendly takeovers, leveraged buyouts, and government meddling both here and abroad.

Therefore we — the governors, officers, and thousands of staff members of the Irrawaddy Steam Nevigation Company — are able to assure you that your Company is steaming full ahead into the twenty-first century with its flags flying and its cargo of cash flow continuing at acceptable levels. With satisfaction we hereby submit our annual summary report of operations.

The Irrawaddy Tule Cat



AGRIBUSINESS

The ISN growing fields and consequent crop pro- duction in the delta farm reserves produced a satisfactory, but certainly not record-breaking, harvest this last season. Tiger moths and an invasion of vegetarian wide-mouth delta sand dabs accounted for the light harvest of both goose grass and Bengal palmetto nuts. In addition, some middling-to-severe damage to the downriver oyster beds is chargeable to the continuing fecundity and resultant overpopulation of the mischievous Irrawaddy tule cats.

These small and amiable animals were originally confined to Ladyship Island on the west side of the river. But their affectionate nature and conjugal habits have recently led to such a crisis of overcrowding that they have been forced to undertake the most arduous escapes. Some of the more athletic cats have successfully swum across the delta channels and resettled on other islands, where they promptly relapse into their intemperate voluptuous life style.

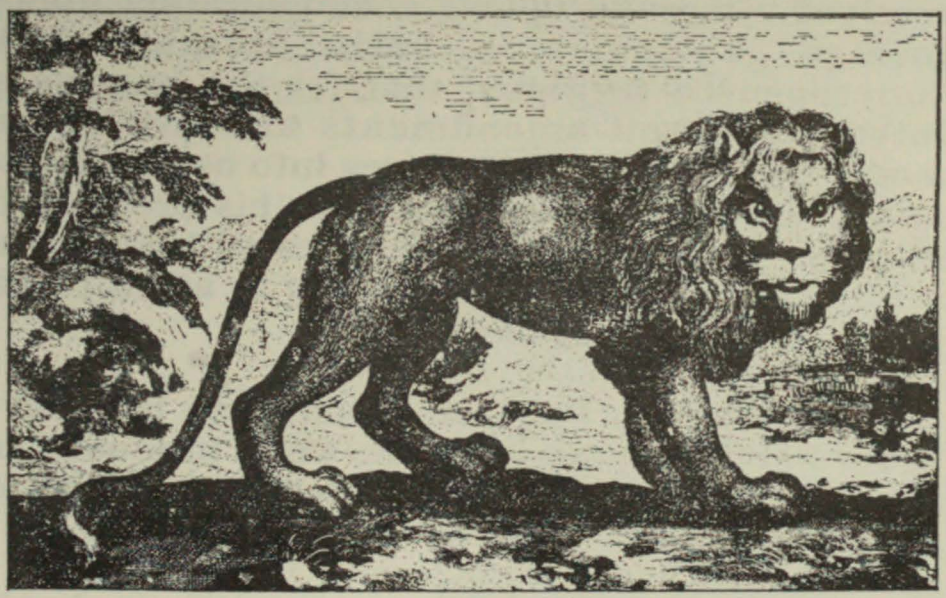
TRANSPORTATION

We regret to inform our shareholders that river traffic, in terms of both freight and passenger service, has been at a relatively low ebb. However, our passenger agents have experienced some gratifying success in offering attractive downriver fares to young upcountry women who, with increasing frequency, are abandoning the rigors of field work and household chores around the family paddies in favor of more opulent employment along the Rangoon waterfront.

It is also a disappointment to report that our widely-admired flagship, the *Burmah Queen*, has been decommissioned and is currently tied up along the Karl Marx Quay (formerly known as Her Majesty's Dock). On the other hand, it is most pleasant to advise you that plans are afoot to recommission the *Queen* as a floating luxury hotel. Our Executive Vice President for Passenger Marketing, a man who had served an apprenticeship with the Club Med group, is currently traveling through Central European capitals offering Berlin-to-Burmah tour packages for distinguished retired executives of the newly-democratized Warsaw Pact member nations.

FOREIGN TRADE

Your Company has severed relations with the Republic of China. This action was taken after learning that Taiwanese entrepreneurs have seriously undercut our feather export business by manufacturing plastic counterfeits of our own tried and tested Lower Irrawaddy Goosedown Mattress Stuffing. This historically successful product has long been favored by insomniacs everywhere.



Guardian of the Goose-Pens

REAL ESTATE

The land development division of your Company has been particularly active.

We have sold, at a substantial profit, the old Polo Club grounds situated just north of Pukka Point. The purchaser is a consortium of Japanese shipping magnates. The new owners have announced that they are preparing to develop this prime waterside property into a 21-hole golf course and driving range, but will maintain the old Polo Lounge and trophy room as a sushi bar.

Our forest and harvest division recently received a most intriguing communication from a foreign gentleman in Latin America. This correspondent suggested that for the purpose of introducing soil amendments and instituting modern reclamation techniques into our hardwood farms, we might be interested in his proposal to interplant our maturing teak trees with cocaberry seedlings — which he would supply by air shipment on a cost-plus-royalty basis.

This provocative offer comes to us from a Senor Narcotico Blanco, whose world headquarters are Postoffice Box 1101, Medellin, Republic of Colombia.

And finally, with the utmost satisfaction, your Company is now able to disclose that we have negotiated a 99-year lease on the old Viceroy's palace, which has stood empty and deserted for these many decades. Our lease, which was closed at the most favorable terms, was made with an American partnership of Motel Six and the International House of Pancakes. Under terms of this rental agreement the old Palace will soon be humming along as the Uncle Sam Fat Boy Round-n-Round Pizza Pagoda.

As a special 1989 Christmas bonus, the terms of this lease include the condition that upon the presentation of proper identification, every bona fide Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Company shareholder shall be entitled to a complimentary Uncle Sam Bullockburger and a large-size macadamia or mangosteen milkshake.

From the Archives of the Irrawaddy Steam Navigation Co.

The Home Office Celebrates a Good Year

MERRY CHRISTMAS
1989

Ruth and Scott Newhall

HAPPY NEW YEAR
1990

Appendix K.

On Music

[An interview conducted April 25, 1990]

Early Sounds of Music

Riess: You've said that music has always being part of your life, and yet we don't have that part of your life on the tape.

Newhall: I'm amazed that I didn't forcibly somehow get back on the topic earlier in these conversations, because music has been certainly one of the most important elements or forces in my personal life.

I suppose since we're going to talk about music, I should try to explain where I fitted into this world of music, how it grew. I don't remember any period in my life, any period, as far as my memory goes, where there was not music present. My memories go back to when I was a little kid, maybe six or seven, after World War I. The first musical experience I had was being taught to sing "There's a Long, Long, Trail A-Winding" or "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" or "Over There." Those were World War I songs. Out of that came the great flowering of what many people call jazz in the twenties and thirties and forties. In those early days I'm thinking of, people sang in the summertime. They would sit down and sing these songs, these rounds, you know, "The Old Mill Stream" or "I Wonder What Became of Sally?" and all that kind of stuff.

When I was a child, we had a music room in our home in San Rafael. We had a piano, we had a set of trap drums. We had mandolins, banjos. Everybody in the family was supposed to learn to play something. There was always music.

I was sent, as everyone was in our group in San Rafael, to take music lessons when I was quite young. Ten, anyway, I guess, or younger. I was not a good performer; I remember I had to learn to read enough music to play something or other called "Sur Le Glace," which I assume means "Over the Ice" in French, and I imagine it was a waltz. It was easy, but I did not like it. I could not learn, really, to read music. I was too impatient. But I loved music, and as I got a little older I learned to cope with music.

When I was a little bit older I had a radio, and I had my own room, finally. That was after the "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" period when I was a child. We had a Swedish nursemaid called Katie. She was this blonde girl--I call her "girl" now but she looked like a sort of a woman to me then, older, probably all of twenty or twenty-one. And there was a big song, "K-K-K-Katie, I'll Be Meeting You by the Kitchen Door." So I learned to sing that. That was one of the first musical things I ever learned, and I always associated that with Katie.

I had my own room, and I had a radio. And I would go to sleep at night--this was when I was still here in San Rafael, not going away to school--and I'd leave the radio on all night, listening to music. These were little combos and bands and jazz and disk jockey, sort of. I'd wake up in the morning listening to it and I'd go to sleep listening to it.

When I got to be ten or twelve I went to the assemblies. There you learn to dance a little bit; get to be about thirteen or fourteen, you begin to live the good life. Socially, it was the thing to go out and dance to the music of Anson Weeks up at the Mark Hopkins Hotel in Nob Hill, and Carol [?] Lofner and Phil Harris down at the St. Francis, and somebody or other down at the Palace. That was when they were playing "Me and My Shadow."

Riess: Slow dancing?

Newhall: Well, they were all right. Actually, they'd always play a couple of pretty fast jazzy numbers during the evening.

At the same time I was just living off of records, too. We all had wind-up gramophones or phonographs. I would go down to buy records at the San Rafael record store, and I'd look at the shelves. They had one group over there; they were segregated. I said, "What's that music? What are those records?" They said, "Oh, that's race music. Those are race records." I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "They're made by blacks--Negroes."

Well, I began to buy those. This was very important to me. There I found the music I was looking for. There were these records made by these black jazz bands--Duke Ellington, I think he called himself "The Jungle Band" then--and it was all this kind of strange African stuff, really. I remember "When Erastus Plays the Old Kazoo." I can't remember who the artist was. But anyway, I used to buy race records. Nobody could understand this. Basically the music I loved and grew up with and knew as jazz was black music as tempered by some whites or Caucasians, and white music tempered by the blacks. It was a fusion.

My Aunt Mildred, my mother's sister-in-law, a nice, big-hearted Swedish woman, but not too bright, she lived over in San Francisco, and I used to go see her because she and Uncle Will had no children. They had a terrible little dingy ground-floor flat or first-floor apartment out by Golden Gate Park in the Panhandle, but they had a player piano.

I would have nothing to amuse myself--she'd take me out to pony rides once in a while in Golden Gate Park, but I'd be there for a long weekend or something--so I would sit at that player piano and pedal it, and I'd play the piano rolls. I would do it by the hour. And I remember Fats Waller and James Johnson or Meade Lux Lewis were some of the piano guys who was cutting the rolls, and there was all this honky-tonk sort of American--not even Tin Pan Alley--American jazz played by blacks. I think probably they were all black, the fellows who cut the rolls. I used to sit by the hour, and I would play them faster, and then you make them sound like a ukulele and so on and so forth.

Somehow that music got into me. So when I was still a little older now, in my teens, I would go out on dates and try to get into a speakeasy or something. I remember coming over from San Rafael, driving down San Pablo Avenue, because I heard on the radio--on this radio I said I played all night--that "Fuzz Duncan and His Gang" or something were playing at a little roadhouse up on a hill in El Cerrito, on the side of San Pablo. So I went down there and cased the joint, and then a couple of us went out and took our girls and went up and sat at the bar. Aye, aye aye, I can't remember the name of the place. Fuzz Duncan? Is it Fezz or Fuzz? I'm not quite sure. Duncan. That would have been about 1928. Yes, I'd been about fourteen.

Riess: And they let you into these places?

Newhall: Yes, sure. They were illegal. But it was just as illegal to have a minor in as it was an adult. That's the wonderful thing about Prohibition.

Riess: What did you have to do to get in?

Newhall: Oh, sometimes you'd say, "Joe the waiter sent me," or something. I never had trouble getting in anywhere, ever. Because I think I looked as if I was good for five bucks or something, I don't know.

Then we went broke in San Rafael. We moved to San Francisco, and the old Chickering piano we had came over there to the attic with us at 2950 Pacific. I used to sit at the piano,

and I'd just bang it like a two-year-old with a certain rhythmic sense. My mother said, "Look, you've got to go down and take some more lessons."

So I went downtown while I was working at the wholesale drugstore, and I took some lessons from a good-looking woman. (I thought she was older, but my mother said, "Oh, boy, she's pretty good looking.") She was Ann Skurich, and she taught me to play modulation around the circle, as she called it. You know, you go from the tonic to the subdominant and go all the way around. She'd sit and play, and taught me to play "Nobody's Sweetheart Now" in F, and "Somebody Stole My Gal" in the key of E-flat. So I got along a little better so I could play a few numbers.

I think it was about that time I went back to Lawrenceville Academy in New Jersey, and there a fellow called Lemke taught me to play the drums a little bit. And I got a sax somehow, and I learned how to play a few scales on the sax and so on. I listened there to radio, all these little jazz bands that were playing in New York and Chicago. They'd have all these late night shows, a little band of about five or six guys, and they'd be playing along. By this time the music was getting a little more interesting.

Riess: Why was it more interesting?

Newhall: It was getting a little more sophisticated, and there was more black influence and style and rhythm creeping into the popular all-American bands. You see, there was beginning to be this fusion between the black whorehouse piano-player and a white band that would play up at the Ritz Hotel for the debutantes. They were beginning to fuse, and they did fuse eventually, in my opinion, with what was called the swing era, which was Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller and some of those guys. Which was essentially a kind of a white ethic with a black rhythm. I'm oversimplifying, and I know a lot of musical experts will sneer at what I'm saying, but this was my experience.

At Lawrenceville I used to sneak out on the weekends after dark; got a guy to either sit or lie in bed for me or something. I'd go up to New York and get there in about forty minutes or something on the train. There was the Orpheum Dance Palace at 42nd and Broadway, and it had gained a certain amount of notoriety among the prep schools. It was known as the Lawrenceville Club because people in Lawrenceville used to go up there or something; the prep school kids, would go up there. It was a ten-cent-a-dance hall. They had all these nice girls there. You'd get a roll of tickets and you'd give a girl a ticket, and you dance with her.

Well, in this place they had a little combo; it was a piano and I think a trumpet, a sax, and drums, if I'm not mistaken. They'd play right around the hour; there was no taking a break. So every hour or forty-five minutes one of the guys in the band would sit down and take a rest or have a drink or something, and they let me in. I played a little piano by this time, and terrible, but a little piano, and the drums. When I'd go up I got to know the guys.

I didn't care so much about dancing with the girls. They were very nice kids, but--. I remember a girl called Sally and another called Angie. Angie and Sally. We were pretty good friends. You'd buy a roll of tickets and you'd dance. The dances only lasted about a minute, two minutes maybe, something like that, and there would always be a bouncer who had a cricket in his hand, you know, one of those little metal jimcracks that you make a little noise with. And if he saw a fellow's hands beginning to stray or something, he'd snap the cricket and the customer would have to get back to safe harbor or something.

Anyway, it was a great experience because these were all black guys. This was some of the happiest times of my life, in music. Joining in with the black fellows.

Then there were the proms. The big bands would come to the schools and universities for the proms. One year I asked a Vassar girl. That was a big deal; nobody else had a Vassar girl, but she was a friend of mine. Somebody else would pick her up at the prom and take her on and dance with her, and I'd stand and listen to the bands. These were early pre-swing bands. There was Ted Weems and Peter van Steeden and Johnny Hamp, some of those earlier big American bands. I'd wander over and sit next to the sax section and I'd talk to the fellows, because I really did love music.

Then what? Then I came to Cal. And at Cal there wasn't that much music at the time. I mean, I'm sure we would all listen to records then. That's when I met Ruth and married here. Now, Ruth's a good musician. She's a good piano player. Sort of an old-fashioned Dixie piano player. We always listened to what was then popular music. This was the beginning of swing, almost. This was '34, '35, in there. Ruth and I tried to write the score for the annual Cal musical extravaganza, but there was a political thing--we wrote some songs, but we didn't win it. Somebody else put it on and it was terrible. But anyway.

Jazz Aficionados

Now, one of the men who came to work on the Chronicle before the war was a fellow called Peter Whitney, and he'd come from Yale. Peter was a friend of mine. He'd been at Tamalpais School with me. He was one of the early jazz aficionados who began to collect records in the early thirties. He had amassed quite a collection.

American jazz can be a very esoteric subject. You'll find good academics at Cal and so on that really follow it and they know the personnel of all these different old bands. Jelly Roll Morton got to be very big by this time. He was a black pianist. Bix Beiderbeck was the idol of the whites--a trumpeter. There was a whole group, as I say, of jazz aficionados; I don't know what else to call them. It was their life. Some of them were in themselves not terribly musical, but they had good ears and they began to amass indexes and records and all of this kind of thing.

Riess: And what do you think the attraction is? Is it to the music or is it the exoticness and the blackness?

Newhall: Oh, I think it's to the music. I cannot explain it. Every man is an island, but there is a great group of people who I think respond to this kind of black-white jazz theme. I really do. I mean, gee, they know the name of the drummers, you know--Joe Jones and Lionel Hampton, who later became a vibraphonist, I think. Did he die or not, do you know? They're almost all gone, by the way. Almost, if not all. And Jonah Jones, the trumpeter. And the Hawkins brothers, Erskine and Coleman Hawkins.

I should interject somewhere that I have absolutely a deaf ear to what is called classical music. I admit it. I'm sorry, it just leaves me totally behind. I can listen to a symphony or two but I've had it after a while.

Riess: Is it boring?

Newhall: I just don't get it. Honestly. It may be that I am reacting against my early music lessons when I had to sit down and learn the names of the composers and look at their pictures and read their histories and try to play their music. Once in a while in a ballet I could pick up on a theme and try to find out what the composer was doing. I think the greatest music--.

I will not argue about it, because obviously some of the classical masters--I think particularly Mozart and Beethoven, I suppose, and maybe Schumann--some of them were marvelous, but it's just not my bag. Furthermore, there is nothing I can hear

or appreciate about jazz music after about 1960. I just can't hear it. I just dismiss it cold. From the days of Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis, I'm dead. I can go through Fats Domino and Elvis Presley, and then I've had it. But Presley didn't mean anything to me because it was this sort of return to the womb, and so was Fats Domino.

Riess: Why?

Newhall: I don't know. It just--. Elvis Presley and Fats Domino lived on about three chords, and I was going to get into the harmonics a little later if you wanted, because there's a very important thing about the harmony in all of this, too.

Riess: You were talking about these people, these university people who were amassing collections of records.

Newhall: Some of them. I mean, it was the Berkeley Hills crowd. Peter--his mother lived over there. It was an old San Francisco family who moved up to Inverness finally. Peter Whitney. He was an intellectual. I'm very fond of him. I think he's still alive. He grew a beard. He went to work in World War II with the New York Times as a correspondent. He started at the Chronicle, incidentally; he wrote the paper's first jazz column, called "Jive."

There was a whole cult of fans in San Francisco and I assume in Berkeley probably even more, a cult built around a renaissance of what some people called Dixieland. It was this strange intermingling of the races in this case. There was the Yerba Buena Jazz Band and Lou Waters--I guess Lou Waters has died--Lou built up around him some remarkable musicians. There was Wally Rose, who's still alive. He was a pianist. Bob Scobie was one of the greatest trumpeters. He was a good friend of mine, Bob was. That was right after World War II, Lou Waters and that crowd.

I think World War II was probably a fantastic milestone in the history of American popular music. In World War II, the whole world, the whole Allied side of the world, was dancing to the jitterbug music and singing the songs of both Tin Pan Alley and the black rhythm--in other words, the Benny Goodman, the big band numbers. "I Got a Gal in Kalamazoo" was very big.

Musically World War II was something like a Roman Catholic Mass: it was the same all over the world, no matter where you went. And you would hear the same music and see the same people dancing in every country of the Western world, only they had different names, of course. In World War II music and jazz was a

tremendous force in bringing people together in a language they could understand. No matter what they spoke, they could understand music. It still is a very solidifying and unifying force. I think music is, aside from sex, the greatest force in getting people together in the world. I really do.

Riess: These were the bands that entertained the troops?

Newhall: Yes, they entertained them in Korea later, and all the South Pacific.

Riess: And they were more integrated?

Newhall: Benny Goodman started the integration, I think. In my opinion, anyway. At least it superficially got started when Benny put Lionel Hampton and Teddy Wilson in a quartet that he had.

The Duke, and Louis, and Earl "Fatha" Hines

Newhall: I want to say, the two greatest forces in music I have ever encountered were Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. Duke, of course, was I think the world's greatest composer--I am sorry about these superlatives, but I do--and Louis, I think, is the greatest instrumentalist who's ever lived. I've always felt that Louis and Winston Churchill and Pope John XXIII and Franklin Roosevelt were the greatest four men who ever lived in this century, and I just want to mention that.

Riess: Did you know any of them?

Newhall: I never met the Pope. I met Roosevelt as a kid, and saw him. Churchill, I never met him, but I've always venerated him. I mean really venerated him.

Louis I met, of course. A little bit; he would never know me. But he was the greatest human being, possibly, in my eyes I ever met, ever saw. He was kind, and he was gifted beyond belief. I don't think he had any snobbishness or hate in him, I really don't. I've always had this funny picture, Suzanne, in my mind for many years, that Louis Armstrong could be sailing in a ship and wrecked on any shore in the world, and if he waded ashore with his trumpet in his hand, he would be surrounded by friends within an hour. This man was unbelievable. Some people sit around, some professionals, and say, "Oh, Louis was an Uncle Tom" or this, that, and the other, which is nonsense. He was Superman.

I listened to Louis--I've got a picture I'll show you later --when I was at Webb School in '28. He was playing at a place called Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club in Culver City. He had a little band there, about six or seven guys, and this was during bootleg days again, of course.

I collected pictures of band leaders. At Webb I had a little band and I used to lead them. I wrote to Louis--and to Ted Weems, Duke Ellington, the whole bunch--I said, "Dear Mr. Armstrong, I am a fan of yours. Will you send me a picture sometime?" He sent me a picture of himself and his band standing in front of a great big sixteen-cylinder Cadillac convertible phaeton out there at the Cotton Club. It blew my mind, as they say in these days. I've still got--not that picture, but I have a copy of the same photo. I lost the one he sent me. But Frank Sebastian, thirty years later, or forty years later, rehired Louis at a place he had in Sacramento and he sent me a picture.

Anyway, Louis was great then, and then he went into an eclipse. Then after the war, in about 1955, he came out with his version of "Mac the Knife." I think it was '55. That made Louis forever. He started in again with "La Vie en Rose," "C'est ci Bon"--he would take all these little sweet, popular tunes. "Blueberry Hill," you name it. Louis was still the greatest.

I'll tell you a story about Louis. Earl Hines comes into it too. I knew Earl pretty well later on, and he'd tell me the story of early Louis. You know, everybody knows the story of Louis Armstrong. But he started out in his Chicago days playing second trumpet in a popular black nightclub, and Earl was around town then. Earl did a lot of playing in Chicago.

He said one night he was in this nightclub, and a fellow called Jimmy Dunne--. He was a big white trumpeter at that time. I didn't know Jimmy Dunne at all, but I guess a lot of musicians would. He was sort of like Doc Severinson; I think he was a fancy white trumpet player. Jimmy Dunne came into the nightclub and everybody stood up and clapped and wanted Jimmy Dunne to play a number with them. (Earl told me what the number was; I've forgotten.) So he said, "Okay."

"Boy," he said, "lend me your trumpet." He got it from this young fellow sitting there with the second trumpet. Jimmy played a big chorus and everybody cheered and Jimmy took his bows and gave the trumpet back to the black kid. The black kid picked up his trumpet and he played about four choruses of the same thing, going higher each time, and that was the beginning of Louis Armstrong. That was Louis. Jimmy Dunne turned around and slunk

out of the club. Earl tells that story with great pleasure.

Anyway, all these fellows knew each other. I admired Earl Hines and his piano-playing for many years. He had rather an intricate earlier style, but he got awfully good and he began winning prizes from Downbeat and things like that. Then Earl got a little older. (Now I'm really jumping around; I'm going up almost to the sixties, seventies, in there.) I began thinking, here are all these black guys who have brought so much beauty and so much harmony and so much happiness to so many people regardless of color or race. And what happens? They blow their brains out or play their fingers off, and then they end up broke and on drugs or something.

I admired Earl so much, I flew back to Washington one day. He was playing there in a basement somewhere. He and Charlie Bird, a guitarist, they were taking turns on the stand. So I got hold of Earl and his sax player, Bud Johnson, and we went up to the bedroom there in the Carlton Hotel. I said, "Look, Earl, there's a fellow called Leonard Martin who is starting a shopping mall called The Cannery here in San Francisco. I'd like to make a deal for you to play at The Cannery. He should pay you as much as you are now earning in a good year. This would be a steady job and you'll have enough to eat and everything else."

He thought it was a pretty good idea. So he came out, and I got Dave Nelson, and Karl [Kortum] maybe, and we talked to Leonard Martin and met there at the old Cannery before they actually built it. Leonard did, in fact, hire Earl, but then it got all screwed up later and it blew apart. I remember I gave them each a twenty-dollar gold piece to seal the deal, and it blew apart. Leonard never sent me back the twenty-dollar gold piece.

But anyway, it was an idea. That's where I got to know Earl. I sponsored a few little performances for him to put on, a few little jobs down at the Palace Hotel. Did you ever see one of those menus? I had big, fancy, Palace menus printed up with all the songs he was going to play, and so on. [See end of appendix] Then I had him play for the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Earl lived in Oakland and I got to know him pretty well. He came down to our house in Piru, and I'd go see him and listen to him when he was playing different places.

Riess: This, I understand, was sort of like the second coming of Earl "Fatha" Hines?

Newhall: Yes, he had a renaissance, and so did Louis, of course. Louis then played until he died, literally. The people whose names I truly revere were the Duke and Louis, Count Basie--he had a tremendous impact on my own personal little style. He just died, and the Duke, and Louis. Johnny Hodges, all these guys, until you get into what they'd call bop or progressive. And then it left me; I just couldn't continue into that era. I'm sorry about that.

Thoughts about Bop and Cool Jazz

Riess: Bop? That was kind of an East Coast thing? And West Coast jazz was something else--cool jazz?

Newhall: Well, cool, whatever it is. It's a totally different harmonic experience. In my opinion it's totally different. Now, if I may talk about harmonies for just a minute. The black contribution to American jazz, I think, was the twelve-bar blues. Are you familiar with all these terms? Do you know what I'm talking about?

Riess: A little.

Newhall: The twelve-bar blues is basically three chords. It's the tonic, the seventh, and the subdominant, and then you go to a minor subdominant if you want. Then back to the tonic and then to the dominant. In other words, you go back to the tonic. Four bars each. So you've got four bars.

What do you want to play it in? In F. You've got four bars in F. And the last beat, you hit the seventh, which in F would be an E-flat note. And then you hit the subdominant chord, which is a B-flat major. Then you play that for four bars, and then you go back to the tonic for a bar, which is back to F, and then down to C-seventh, which is the dominant. (C is the dominant, B-flat's the subdominant.) Go back to the C-seventh and then back to F.

Now, that's all it is. Some of your experts with their records and indexes will disagree with me, but that theme, three-harmony scene, I think takes care of about 30 percent of all jazz which you listen to. Now, there are certainly some variations on it--many, many variations--and sometimes some minor or diminished chords and such. W. C. Handy kind of popularized it, started it off with the "Memphis Blues" or "St. Louis Blues." [See final section of appendix, A Letter]

Riess: What's the effect of having such a prescribed form?

Newhall: It's something that's magic. I can't explain it. To me it just stirs your soul. You can sit and listen to a blues--. I've played them all night with people sometimes, literally. It's ecstatic, almost.

And the infinite variations on the mood, on the rhythm--sometimes it's very fast; then it can be very slow. And then there are certain harmonic dissonances that people will put in. You get a Chicago-style blues, and it's powerful. It's just powerful, the Chicago is. Every musician in the world, white, black or whatever, plays the blues. Ted Lewis used to play it. It's all built on sometimes a minor third note. I can't explain it. I'm sorry, because I'm an idiot in terms of harmony. But this is the soul, and the soul and the guts of American jazz.

Riess: Do you actually have what you would call influences on your own style?

Newhall: I used to play a lot of piano, but lousy. Lousy. But once in a while I'd have a good time and I'd get to playing. I can talk about that later when we get into drugs and jazz. If you want. I'm trying to think what else. I guess I should try to explain my feelings, I don't know why, about this cool music and bop and whatever the hell they call it. This got off into progressive music with the flatted fifth.

The old American--from about 1930 to 1950--system of popular jazz music, a big band or a combo, they'll play the song, whatever song it is, straight through. They'll give you a chorus of it. Then from then on they're all improvising five, six, seven, eight choruses, whatever you want. In other words, they're getting away, in a sense. Not harmonically, but certainly as far as the melody goes, melodically away from the original version. And then they come back in the end; they all do it together and come out. And that went on for years, all these songs, you know. You'd have these jitterbug numbers and everything else; half of them were just the straight blues, but they all took on different patterns, different rhythms and vocals.

Well, you get into the late fifties, early sixties, and you had two or three things happen. The old system began to pall on the younger generation, I guess, the old music that we listened to. Perhaps it had just run its course; there was nothing new that we could come up with. So there was a little bit of what they call rock 'n' roll with Elvis and Fats Domino. That was

just a straight blues, just one, two, three, four rhythmic chords for the adolescents. But it was okay; it was legitimate.

Then something was happening racially. The black musicians, some of the performers, were so gifted. They were perhaps more gifted than some of the white performers, or they had something there that the whites couldn't quite do. So the blacks went their own way with their--I don't know what terms to use. Bop or cool music or progressive, whatever. Maybe the whites were progressive and the blacks were bop, or something. But I could see it. I could hear the parting of the ways and the conflict.

I used to go out to supper clubs sometimes after regular hours. We'd go out to Bop City--that was Jimbo's on Post Street, I think it was, out by Fillmore--this late-hours joint where the cops would let you drink. I knew Jimbo; John Edwards, his name was. He was born the same day I was, same year. I gave him a pair of gold cufflinks.

They'd all jam after hours. The black guys would get up there and they would play things so intricately, they would improvise in areas that my ear could not reach. Or at least I found it boring. And found what the whites were trying to do at the same time also exceedingly boring. That was the era of sort of "How High the Moon" in flatted fifths. They'd go through it, and then they would take off, and harmonically I don't know what the hell was going on.

I asked Earl about this one time. I said, "Hey, Earl, I was listening to a saxophonist, a guy with a plastic saxophone, a fellow called Ornette Coleman." I said, "What the hell's he doing?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "I had to sit in with a bunch of those fellows one time." He said, "We all started in and we began to play a number." He said, "I don't know. I suddenly just sat back and put my hands on my knees. I didn't know what they were doing." He said, "I didn't want any part of that."

I'm trying to describe my puzzlement and concern. I just couldn't get with it. I never followed it. Louis Armstrong made a great record in which he took on bop. It's called "The Bopinpoof Song," and it's a straight take-off on the "Whiffenpoof Song" from Yale. I think every musician should sit down and listen to that about once a month. It's the cleverest thing. Oh, Louis just takes it on.

And Dizzy Gillespie. This is the Dizzy Gillespie era I'm talking about. Louis and Dizzy got together at least once and played a little bit for a TV show or record or something, and I

saw them, and I still think Louis's the greatest.

Riess: When they went off on these flights where you ended up being bored because the harmonics were so impossible, was that a kind of drug-inspired music, or was it just a little bit tougher and harder to understand?

Newhall: I don't know. I cannot understand it. I can't hear it. I can hear anything by Benny or any of those guys, or Louis or any of those guys who ever played.

Riess: Who <u>can</u> hear it if you can't hear it?

Newhall: I don't know. Honestly, I really don't. I am not putting it down. I just can't hear it. They're doing something that I find either totally tedious, or a lot of it is just virtuosity with the fingers, I'd think. But I don't want to put it down because I don't want to put Beethoven down.

<u>Drugs</u>

Newhall: You mentioned drugs. And I guess I better talk about that. I don't think there's ever been any great music anywhere in the world, probably, that is not tied in with drugs. And I don't mean just Western music, I mean anywhere. I have no way of proving this, but I think music and drugs are almost inescapably intertwined. I do know that so much of the beginning, I'm sure the black early music, I don't know what they would be drugged on, whether it would be wine or some kind of marijuana or something. The whites, at least, were drugged on marijuana and gin all during the Prohibition era. And during the war everybody's drugged, in all wars.

All the great musicians that I have ever known, with maybe one or two exceptions--I know there were, but I don't know exactly whom--have used drugs. Or drug-users have used music. I think they are, I repeat, inescapably welded together. Most performers have played their best, they will say, if they have something in them, to relax a part of their nervous system. Whether you would call it your stagefright or whatever.

I have played sometimes when I'd have alcohol or have some barbiturates in me, and it's been a much richer experience for me and for any audience. The audience themselves find more pleasure in a lot of music if they have a couple of dollops of something or other in them.

That's why when I get into this whole business of America and drugs, I just throw up my hands. This is a drug-laden society. It is now and it always has been and it always will be. Western civilization has always been under the influence of drugs, certainly in any history I've ever read of it. So now--I mean, I'm totally off the subject of music just for a moment--you have this whole culture, this whole establishment of drug czars, of police officers, of presidents, who are making billions of dollars out of calling us a drug-laden society, and they're in it for the money. They're not doing anything about the drugs. I'm sorry, it's a whole new subject. But music has always been interwoven with drugs, I can guarantee you.

Riess: And music and religion too.

Newhall: I was going to get into choral music in the black churches. There is nothing to me more beautiful than a good black choir. Did you ever hear them?

Riess: Yes.

Newhall: They're fantastic. They're marvelous.

Riess: But they're not drugged.

Newhall: What's the difference between religion and drugs? How do you know they're not drugged? It's all opiate, and the music itself may be the opiate. Some of them maybe never touch it. But all the great artists that I have ever known--I don't know, I never asked, but I think they've all been involved one way or another with marijuana.

The police frequently used to run these innocent people in. Billie Holiday, my god, she was out here singing and they found a little capsule of heroin she was trying to hide in the toilet tank, and the federal agents ran her in to jail. I mean, this is so awful. What harm is this woman who used to sing beautifully doing, and yet the guys who are running her in depend on doing that for their paycheck. It's a terrible thing, Suzanne, and I feel very deeply about it, but anyway, it's a fact.

Riess: You're linking the drugs and the music. What about other arts? You say all great artists?

Newhall: I don't know, I'm sure a lot of painters use drugs, including alcohol and so on, but I don't know. I'm not qualified, and I'm really not qualified to even talk about music. But it's meant so much to me. It saved my life. When they amputated my leg at St.

Luke's Hospital in 1937, I remember I went down for a number of operations. When they finally amputated it, they stopped in the middle or something, and I came half out of the anaesthetic and I heard myself singing "The Love Bug Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out." Now, that was a little jingle. But music, it saved my life.

Riess: Give some more examples of what you mean by that.

Newhall: Well, without music I think I probably would have dried up and died long ago. A world without music is a world you can't believe.

Riess: Is it a substitute for something else?

Newhall: No, it's an experience all of its own, I think. It's an extrasensory or an additional sensory experience.

Riess: You're saying that without this kind of music, without jazz--.

Newhall: In my life. I'm sure that classics or opera or symphonic music has saved other people from desperation.

Riess: I think that jazz tunes in to a different set of brain waves than classical music does, and that it really is an escape different from classical music. I think physiologically, it's a really different thing.

Newhall: I don't disagree with what you're saying at all. I was not going to make a postulate of that nature, but I don't disagree with you at all. There is something about the rhythmic and harmony of jazz that to me is just an extra experience. It's very personal, and maybe in your case it's the same, I don't know.

Going Where the Music Was

Newhall: I have listened to music in the strangest places. One time we were coming home from a week in Guaymas in Mexico, and we were driving, coming down the Gila River in Arizona. Here we were in a little town about the size of Lovelock, Nevada, small, one street. Paul Smith was with us. Ruth and I went out and we hit this little saloon that served meals, and there was this black guy banging away at the piano, playing perfectly good jazz as far as I know, like a scene from a John Ford movie, kind of, out there in the middle of the Arizona desert. As far as I was concerned, I could always relate to those people. I went over

and I put a few dollars in his glass and I talked to him. He played for us, I guess, for four of five hours, and we had a wonderful time. People can communicate with music in a way that's to me very exciting and quite unbelievable.

Riess: There's also a lot of misery and unhappiness associated with all of that.

Newhall: Yes, but you can alleviate a lot of it, let it out, if you play a blues routine. You can. It's the funny thing about those chords I was trying to describe. You go to a minor third or play that blues formula, and it's amazing. Duke Ellington, I understand, gave a performance in Westminster Abbey, some kind of sacred music, and I've always tried to get a tape on it and I never could, because I've heard it was one of the greatest things that was ever done. Was it ever released? I really don't know. I've asked Dolly [Rhee] to try and find it. Dolly has the most fabulous collection of jazz. Oscar Peterson is her particular idol.

By the way, I did mention, I think, two of the greatest musicians, and of course pianists who have ever lived. Earl is, I think, one of them, and the Duke is a hell of a lot better pianist, than a lot of people think. A lot of experts will put him down and say, "Oh, he's a great composer," but he was the most marvelous pianist harmonically, almost, I've ever heard. But the greatest single one is probably Arthur Tatum. Tatum is to the practicing professional pianist what any great god is to a mortal. And the other one, of course, is Oscar Peterson. Now, Oscar has survived all this bop and that stuff. He surmounts it.

Riess: Did you follow musicians, or did you just let it come to you here?

Newhall: No. Just wherever I went, I could find it. I was back at a Sunday editors' conference in 1950, in Colorado Springs. With some friends of mine, Ruth and I were driving up to Denver, and there was this place that looked like a wigwam on the side of the road. I said, "Let's go in there and get a sandwich or something." We go in there, and there's a sign at the door saying, "Red Nichols." The rebirth or something of Red Nichols. Well, Red Nichols was a big name in the late twenties and early thirties, and this was 1950.

There was Red Nichols and his band playing regular standards. So we got to know Red Nichols pretty well. He was staging his comeback, you know. All these guys all have a comeback. He came down and played here in the Palace Hotel on the corner there of New Montgomery and Market, what they call the

Tudor Room, and I saw a lot of him. He was a regular white guy, but he was all mixed up and knew everybody in the black world too.

My music has always gone toward black combos or quartets or trios or something. I love them. Ruth and I got Eddie Haywood, who was an old friend, to come out and play at our fiftieth wedding anniversary. He came all the way across with his side men and he played for us down in Piru there.

Then there's the other school--and there's an immense and growing school--of white Dixieland music here in California, and I guess all across the country. They have these enormous conventions in Sacramento and San Diego and Pismo Beach. There are some wonderful musicians there. When I say white, every one of those whites who's any good, they know all the blacks, but it is sort of, at least superficially, kind of segregated. Maybe once in a while a couple of black guys will sit in. But there's not--. I can't explain it. But that's Dixieland, and that is a very, what is the word? Not contrived. Disciplined. It's a very disciplined sort of music that they come up with. Once again, they start out with a melody and then they all take off and do their laid back choruses and personal interpretations.

Riess: Where did you go to listen to music?

Newhall: I liked three or four places, particularly Pier 23, the Tin Angel and the Black Sheep, and the Club Alabam.

In the fifties and sixties I used to go out to the Club Alabam. That was on Post out there toward Fillmore. There was a quartet that played there. Wilbert Barranco on the piano, Jerome Richardson on the sax, Bob Barfield on the trumpet or trombone. Vernon Alley on the bass fiddle. They were friendly, infectious, hardworking fellows. They just played whatever they felt like, or you asked for. They did the numbers you wanted, in their style. It was a regular kind of black combo. It was very friendly.

Now, Barfield died of drugs. Jerome Richardson, I used to drive him home to Berkeley at night afterwards. He played the sax. Wilbert Barranco was a good piano player, and he played for years out at the Tunnel Inn in Lafayette, and then he went and played at the Claremont Hotel, solo--solo at the Tunnel Inn. Vernon Alley has played with every band in the country with his bass fiddle, and now he's a member in very high standing in the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. I see him around every now and then. They were San Francisco guys. We listened to them a lot.

There was another place out in the Fillmore called Jack's. I used to go there. They'd play what they called viper songs [another name for marijuana]. There was always marijuana in the air. I mean, nobody showed it all that much, but it was always there. Now, I'll go on record: I never had a puff of marijuana in my life. I've had barbiturates once in a while, when I got out of the hospital, and I got into alcohol very deeply sometimes, but I never got into any of these later and more fashionable drugs.

Riess: Did you never smoke cigarettes?

Newhall: Oh, yes.

Riess: Well, why didn't you try marijuana?

Newhall: I didn't want to. I thought it was bad for you and I didn't want to get involved. I think I am a naturally addictive person, and so I steered clear.

Riess: Who did you listen to music with?

Newhall: Ruth. And my friends. A lot of people wouldn't go down there; they'd ask me, would I bring them down? I'd say sure.

I mentioned Jimbo's earlier--Bop City. Jimbo was up the street from the Club Alabam. The Club Alabam was wiped out early. We spent many nights and hours there. Then there was a place called the Longbar in San Francisco. There was a fellow called Sunny who ran that. It was on the other side of Fillmore, on Fillmore Street itself. The Longbar had a long bar, and I've only been there a couple of times. I went out there to listen to Errol Garner, the pianist. He had quite a style.

While I was there one night, up on the bar itself as you went in was Slim Gaillard, who was the "Slim" of Slim and Slam. They had a duet, you know? Do you remember them at all? They made a couple of really bigtime records. They were very big. Slim Gaillard. At the Longbar he was working out his bar bill, literally. They weren't paying him anything, but he'd drink and he'd play his guitar whenever Errol took a break.

We went over to hear Errol Garner in Berkeley one time at the community theater. Errol was playing and Sarah Vaughan was also singing. This was quite early. Ralph Gleason was then the music critic at the Chronicle. Errol didn't show up. He was supposed to come on first, and then Sarah was going to sing. But Errol had not shown up yet, so Sarah came out and sang. She was singing very beautifully then. I think she's marvelous.

Then the curtain closed and it was the time when Errol was supposed to come on, and by golly there he came. He sat down and he played beautifully for about an hour, an hour and a quarter. Afterwards we went up to him, and Ralph said, "Hey, Errol, why were you late? What happened?"

Errol said, "I was coming down from Seattle on the train, and when we got to Portland I remembered I hadn't picked up my laundry. So I got off the train in Portland and picked up my laundry, and I got the next train." I can't tell you what he was really saying. I mean, that's what he said. [laughter] You figure it out.

Riess: When you say that your friends needed you to take them down there, they didn't want go down by themselves?

Newhall: Some of them, they were afraid to go down to Fillmore. You get a girl from Hillsborough in a mink coat, you know, and she doesn't feel exactly at home in the Fillmore at, say, Webster or Buchanan Streets. I loved all these guys; I never had any problems.

Riess: The music got better after midnight?

Newhall: Well, then they'd all jam. You know, just anybody who was around, they'd get up, and I'd watch sometimes. The blacks outplayed, outjammed the whites. It got to be kind of a little race war in a way, it really did.

I think there was a lot of dissension, and if not hate, at least dislike, that grew up in the music. I have always perceived music as a totally unifying force. I thought, "Here is the language with which we can all get together." In the sixties I suppose mostly the blacks, but both blacks and whites were beginning to use it as a divisive force for a while, and I think that's tragic.

Riess: So does the audience cheer for one or the other?

Newhall: Oh, no. It was far more an undercurrent. More sophisticated. Nobody said anything. Nobody clapped much for anybody. When the cool music came on, or bop, or whatever the words you're going to use, it was an intellectual exercise and it was an exercise in expertise or virtuosity. You don't ever hear anybody whistling a tune that came out of that. You just don't.

Riess: What about this tradition of applauding after each person's riff?

Newhall: It was different with different artists. With Art Tatum you

never applauded except when he was finished. You never applauded a chorus. With Earl Hines it wouldn't matter. With the Duke, when his band played everybody would applaud a Charlie Barnett or a Johnny Hodges solo or something like that. It depended on the band, on the mood of the people. I've applauded twice in my life when I shouldn't have, but I was so carried away I just did.

In the Blood

Riess: I've read about a jazz group at the California School of Fine Arts. Painters, like David Park, who also played some jazz in their studios. Were you in on that at all?

Newhall: I went up one night to--I don't know whose house, up on the hill there, with Mark Schorer. Mark was a good friend of mine; I don't know if I mentioned him earlier or not. He was a very good friend of mine. He and Ruthie and I went to listen to some music, because they used to come out with us and go one place or another to listen, the Schorers did. As I recall now, it was David Park on the piano--he was smoking a lot--and Hilliard Wilson, who was the husband of an English girl who'd come over during World War II.

Hilliard Wilson, he was a really nice person. I mean, I really admired--I liked him. He was a very warm person. He died shortly a little after of cancer. He was playing the trumpet; he was a damn good trumpeter. I don't know who was on the drums or sax or anything. But they were playing perfectly good music. It was sort of intellectually contrived a little bit, because all these guys were either in the faculties or academics or building laser beams or something. You know, up the hill there. But it was good music.

Riess: Why "because"? They couldn't have really been doing it out of their deep-down?

Newhall: They were doing it out of their soul just as much as I would, and they needed to express something. Oh, I'm not belittling it in any way. They were very good, I thought, and they enjoyed it so much. These Dixieland guys really love it. Usually they have another occupation or preoccupation, maybe that's what I'm trying to say, because they have to eat.

I wanted to be a musician and go on the road when I was a kid. I mean, I really, really loved it. But it didn't work out and I guess I'm lucky because too many of them have died too

young.

Riess: I think it's the second love of a lot of people.

Newhall: Yes, I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is. I guess you never get it out of your blood. I remember one time we were sitting around one night just talking after World War II, and everybody was saying--we were all in the newspaper business or something like it--"What would you really do now if you had your choice? You could be anything, do anything." They all wanted different things.

I said, "I want to be the world's greatest guitar player, because I can carry my instrument with me and I will be welcome wherever I go." That was my feeling. I said that because I knew Earl had arrived to play a date one time down in the Southeast, somewhere down in the Mississippi basin. When he got to the platform where they were going to hold the concert, in a tent or something, the fellow who was running it looked at him and said, "Hey, where's your piano?" [laughter] I thought, "I don't want to be a pianist because I can't carry the piano with me." They had to send out and get a piano for Earl; the guy didn't even know it.

Riess: What about Ralph Gleason? Was it unusual to have a jazz critic?

Newhall: Ralph was a jazz critic, and Ralph was into it very seriously. He was a good friend, and I respected him.

Riess: Did you bring him to the paper?

Newhall: Oh, maybe Gordon Pates did. It was when I was there. I don't know. I think Gordon arranged it. Gleason appeared there.

Ralph was very black-oriented, no matter what he ever says or wrote. It was at that period when the cool stuff was coming on. He had a very big problem with his kidneys--diabetes. He couldn't eat anything when we'd go out. We went out quite a lot; we'd listen to it. I thought he was very black-oriented in a sort of impatient way, if you know what I mean. But I was always very fond of him and admired his compassion.

Riess: What's that mean?

Newhall: Well, all things being equal, some people insist that the black's always going to be better than the white. A little bit. I think they're equal, but anyway. Except I think the blacks have been the greater instrumentalists on the whole. On the whole.

Riess: Is this a discussion that comes up--these racial issues--around jazz?

Newhall: Not really.

Riess: No?

Newhall: Never. I am just laying out what I have observed. It is purely personal, and I'm afraid a lot of people, if they ever bother to read this or listen to this, it will offend some and shock some, and I don't mean to. But this is the way it looks to me. I speak of the racial problem because I'm so sorry that there has to be a racial problem. As a practicing messiah I have not been able to resolve it, to cure it. I don't know.

Riess: You mean the racial problem generally?

Newhall: Generally, and also in music. It disturbed me deeply to see people using music as a weapon rather than as a healing agent.

Riess: Do you think that there was some point along in there when black music was supreme, that more could have been made of that for the sake of these racial issues?

Newhall: I don't know, but I do know that blacks have made this marvelous contribution. Some blacks, I'm sure, will resent in a strange way when you say a black is better than a white at playing something, or creating, or something, and I don't want to get into a lot of heavy grass there.

You were asking about places we used to go in San Francisco. I 've mentioned Bob Scobie, haven't I, already? There was a fellow called Eddie Smith who played for a while, around. I used to go down to Pier 23--it's still down there, a little place--and that's where Burt Bales used to play. He was a nephew of the managing editor of the Call-Bulletin. Burt got to be a very close friend of mine; I saw a lot of him.

A trumpeter wandered in there once. Burr Curtice, his name was. Oddly enough, he was a Lawrenceville graduate. He committed suicide because he stuttered badly. A trumpeter. Anyway, we all got to be very good friends. He and Burt made some records. And we'd go in there, and then we'd go out all night, go out to, I guess, what was it? Bop City. Burr would get up and play the trumpet. Burt knew--. Everybody sort of knew everybody else there.

Riess: During the war years and postwar years, when there was a feeling that you might not survive anyway, jazz had an important escapist

aspect, didn't it?

Newhall: Wherever I went, I would always seek out the tinkle of the piano or the wail of the horn, and you could find it in London and down in the Caribbean. Wherever the army set up, there would be saloons in the outskirts where they'd fly women of ill repute in to give solace to the troops. There was always a lot of music and dancing.

Riess: These are desperate hours, and so you go and listen to music.

Newhall: Well, they're also boring. Both. They're desperate, but if you're on a base somewhere and there's nothing to do, music will help chew up the time. In London during the war, you know, when the Germans were still bombing, there was always a nightclub here, there, or everywhere else, and there was usually an American black guy playing somewhere, even on a piano. I don't know, I guess it's the way people buy marijuana and cocaine now; if you're into it you know where to get it. I don't know how else to describe it.

Newhall in Performance

Newhall: For whatever it's worth, there were three occasions on which I participated in performances that were totally exciting and satisfactory to me. One of them was on a trip around the world with the Valley Forge. Flying home, we stopped off at the Azores. There was an Army base there, and there was a band of enlisted men playing along. I remember they were playing "I'm Confessin' That I Love You" when I walked in.

I had the mood on me, and I said to the fellow, "Hey, can I sit in here and play a few bars of this?" Well, I took his place at the piano and I guess we must have played with the band there until about four in the morning. We got going in playing the blues once, I know, for more than an hour.

I used to play the blues with a piano for J. P. Cahn. He used to have a voice, a big bass voice, and would sing the blues. He was into kind of the Jewish end of it. I didn't get into Tin Pan Alley; you know, there's a big amalgamation of Jewish culture, too, if I may use these terms. Please forgive me. It's had a tremendous impact on jazz. I didn't mention that.

Riess: But that was New York. Was it also out here?

Newhall: Well, all the big bands. Weren't they all Jews, American Jews? The Dorsey Brothers, Benny Goodman? I don't know about Glenn Miller. Most of them. Think about it, think about many of your opera singers, and Previn, Andre Previn. Hollywood, it's just loaded with people from the Jewish culture. They are marvelous musicians. Yehudi Menuhin, he was my age, I guess. He was always held up to me as the great god of wisdom.

Riess: We're talking jazz, right?

Newhall: But jazz is the same thing in terms of performance.

Riess: So you were playing, you said, for J. P. Cahn.

Newhall: Oh, we played all the time. The blues, we'd just sit down, everybody would sit around, like your Berkeley groups, and play a little blues.

And another time down at Costa Rica, in the big theater across from the Grand Hotel there, there was a tour of editors put on by the United Fruit Company. We all drifted into this theater, and there was a piano up on the stage. Roger Ferger, who was the publisher of the Cincinnati Post-Inquirer, said, "I can play the drums!" I think there'd been a band up there, you know, playing "God Bless America" or something. He got the drumsticks and he began to drum on a chair, so I sat down at the piano, and we played Americantile popular jazz for about four or five hours there. I enjoyed it so much. We had a good audience. It was a lot of fun.

I had another time when I got drunk up in Lovelock. God, I played all night with a Spanish--Mexican guitarist. And it's fun. But it helps if you've got a couple of drinks in you. At least it helped me.

Riess: What about this picture that I showed you, of you playing the gutbucket?

Newhall: That's a machine I made, yes. Some guy showed me how to make it, and I still play it. Ruth played the piano and I played the gutbucket at a fundraising banquet for the special children's school down in Valencia about six months ago. I've still got one in the basement.

Riess: How much music can you get out of that?

Newhall: A lot. If the listener has a tin ear, you get a lot of music out of it. It's a one-string bass fiddle, that's all. But it has a certain charm if it's used correctly, or at least with

enthusiasm.

Riess: Did your kids all play something?

Newhall: No. They all, like me, got a few lessons, and they sort of rejected it, but they cannot stay away from a piano. When they walk in--. Oh, by the way, a grandson is a hell of a good pianist. Classical. He's a hell of a good pianist. I don't know how he did it.

Riess: What's his name?

Newhall: David. He's Skip's, my oldest boy's, son. But he's a graduate MIT engineer, and he's in engineering. I've been trying to teach him to get into this jazz thing, and I send him records with Count Basie and Earl Hines. If I had his skill, I'd be on the road today. I'm all thumbs.

Riess: Do you have a big record collection, or was it burned?

Newhall: Well, I lost a lot of old records, 78s. I do have a collection of tapes that you wouldn't believe. Much of it came from a friend of mine called Ted Lamkin, and from Dolly. Dolly, she comes in with an endless supply of tapes for me. She goes out and buys disks [CDs] now. Most of the stuff is from the people of whom we've spoken.

[Interruption] [music playing in background]

This is just the Count fooling along. I can't tell what they're playing. It's the rhythm that's going, you see, here. And the Count weaves his little pattern in the blues. It's just straight blues they're playing. Now they're going into subdominant. Now they're going to come back to the tonic. Now they're in the dominant. Want me to turn it up?

Riess: No, but it'll be fun for the transcriber.

Newhall: They'll go through it once more. I don't know what key they're in. Now they'll go around again. Now this is the tonic. To the seventh. Now the subdominant. Back to the tonic. Now it's part of the dominant. And wrap it up. See, they just keep going around. Twelve bars after twelve bars after twelve bars, and they're all having a ball. If the musician aren't loving it, forget it.

The Duke, his music was so great. He was such a great piano player. He had chords and harmonies that nobody's ever touched. And Oscar Peterson, he's got juicy chords you can't believe.

Dave Brubeck's a white guy; he's fantastic at times. Brubeck is great.

[Listening to the music] I don't know, I love it. I'm no Count, but I mean, I could sit down and play with those guys all night. He's going to knock it off now, I think. No, he's going to go around again. Yes, he is. Yes, he knocked it off. There you go. [music ends]

[Music begins again] Count Basie, he can do it with two fingers. He was great. He does one--I don't know if this is the right tape--he does "I'll Always be in Love with You." I don't know if you know that song. You know, it's the embroidering on the old Tin Pan Alley songs that's so great. Good old Count.

[Listening to new tape] The first time I heard this was at the end of the Winter Olympics in 1968. You know Ray Charles?

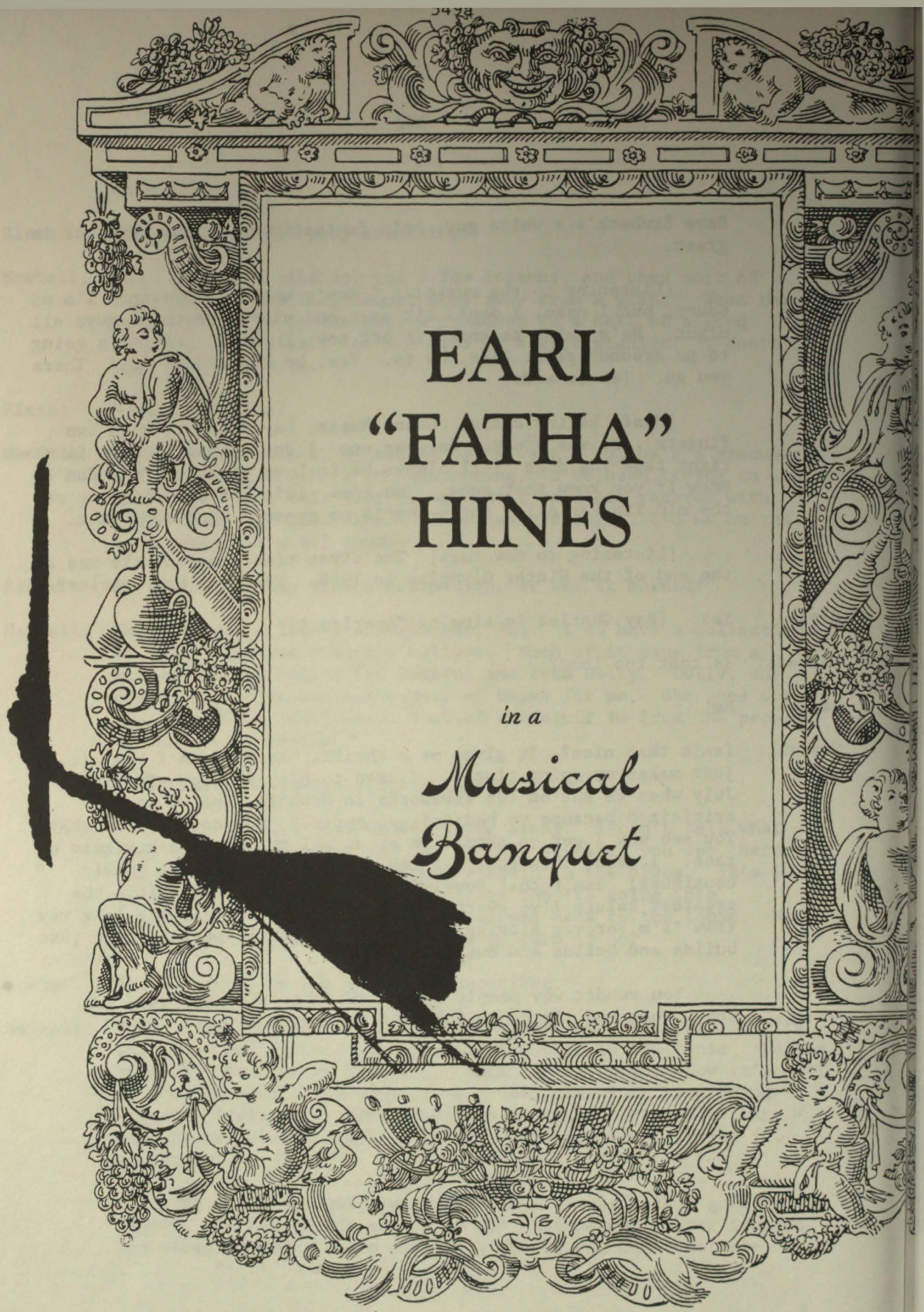
Riess: Yes. [Ray Charles is singing "America."]

Newhall: Is that too loud?

Riess: No.

Newhall: Isn't that nice? It gives me a thrill. Every time I hear it, it just makes my spine tingle. I used to play it every Fourth of July when we put on the fireworks in Newhall, and we were criticized because we had "nigger music." How do you like that? You see why I get so sensitive about all this stupid business of race. I mean, this guy is participating in America. [music continues] Isn't that lovely? It'll make you cry. It's the greatest salute I've ever heard to America. But it's a long way from "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," I'll tell you that. It just builds and builds and builds.

You wonder why people blow each other's brains out, you know, when you listen to this. It's pretty.


EARL
"FATHA"
HINES
in a
Musical
Banquet

Aperitifs

I'll See You in C•U•B•A

Hors d'oeuvres

Day By Day

I've Got The World on a String

Sunday Kind of Love

Do Nothing 'til You Hear From Me

Potages

Blue Moon

Moon Glow

It's Only a Paper Moon

Moonmare

Poissons

Speak Low

Tangerine

It Happened in Monterey

Lollipops and Roses

Entrees

Sometimes I'm Happy

Intermission

Mr. Hines will continue his concert after a suitable pause so that refreshments may be secured by the patrons.

Grillades

West Side Story

Salades

Chef's mixed guitar greens in season with percussion dressing

Legumes

Why Was I Born

Desserts

I Wish You Love

Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime

Mandy Make Up Your Mind

Liqueurs

I'll See You in My Dreams

It's a Pity to Say Good Night

Garden Court, Sheraton-Palace Hotel
July 26, 1969

Appendix L.

Piru CA 93040
April 27, 1990

Dear Suzanne:

As may have been expected, our conversation on the subject of music inspired a lot of memories of my sometimes casual, sometimes orchestrated, adventures in the wonderful world of jazz. Please forgive me, but as a brief addendum I am compelled to forward to you these few episodes from past years, none of which was significant, perhaps, but all of them were, to me, specially poignant.

1. In 1938 I made a trip to New York on an assignment for This World, the news review section of the Sunday Chronicle. I stayed, I think, at the old Commodore Hotel. I was still on crutches; I had not got a wooden leg yet, but was very nimble. At night I would go out of the hotel down to Fifth Avenue, hail a cab, and ask the driver where a passerby might find some good musical action.

The first night he drove me down to the Village, to a joint called Nick's. which was a sidewalk street-corner saloon near Washington Square. I spent the whole evening listening to Bobby Hackett's band. This was a cheerful deluge of jazz standards of brassy stuff, and Bobby Hackett -- who is still very highly regarded among white horn players -- played a delicious Dixieland trumpet (or cornet -- I don't know which). With Bobby on the bandstand were Eddie Condon on the guitar and Peewee Russell with clarinet. I am hazy on the names of the other fellows.

Naturally, before Nick's closed its doors for the night I had met and spent most of the evening with the band. This was one splendid evening of paleo-Dixie music. I think Bobby died a few years ago, but I recall there was a good article about him in the Sunday magazine of a New England or east Canadian paper in 1970 or '71 or so. It appeared in the same issue alongside a piece about the voyage of the Eppleton Hall. This might have been in the Hartford paper.

2. The next night (in New York) I asked the cab driver what was going on in the musical world up in Harlem. He drove me up Fifth Avenue to a place on the west side of the street -- the name of which unfortunately refuses to come back to me. This was downstairs (off the sidewalk)

with a small dance floor circled with supper tables with white linen tablecloths, and with a little raised stage at the far end opposite the entry door. The place was almost deserted. I sat at the table, drinking ginger ale or some other sickly concoction. There were a couple of customers at another table, and up toward the front sat a single elderly gentleman listening to the small band. Of course everybody in the joint -- the help, the customers, and the musicians -- was black. And I was this young kid with one leg sitting by myself and drinking 50 or 60 cents worth of sugar and carbon dioxide.

Suddenly the waiter came over to me and said: "Young man, you look as if you might want some company. And Mr. Handy wants to know if you would like to come over to his table and join him." Well, this was about the most unexpected and tempting invitation I had ever received, and, indeed, I did quickly hop up and moved over to join the old guy at the front center table.

This turned out to be my great evening spent in the company of W.C. Handy -- Bill Handy-- who was, even then, the legendary composer of the St. Louis Blues, Memphis Blues, Beale Street Blues, etc. etc., father of the great popular American blues movement.

Mr. Handy was one of the sweetest men I have ever met. He was totally gracious -- or chivalrous actually -- unassuming and somehow compassionate. And I recall he was having trouble with his eyesight. He asked me why I was there and why I seemed so pleased to join him, and I told him obviously and truly: "Because I love your music." He then said, "I'm here because I am interested in giving this young trumpeter up there on the stage some support." He gestured toward the bandstand, where the fellows were playing "After You've Gone" or "Lady Be Good" or "Tin Roof Blues" or something like that. Then Mr. Handy continued: "That young boy is a fine horn player. But he has experienced some difficulties because he lost his regular playing arm in an accident, and now he's learning to play all over again with his other hand. And I want to give him all the support I can." And for the first time that evening I suddenly realized that we had been listening to a one-armed trumpet player.

Well, that's the end of that musical vignette. Then the band, the young horn player and all the rest sat around at our table until the club closed its doors. They played every request I could come up with. I have always treasured that happy evening.

3. While discussing earlier some of the local San Francisco Bay Area gin mills where we used to go for musical nourishment, I think I neglected to mention Slim Jenkins' place in downtown Oakland, fronting on that big street that used to run parallel to the Alameda estuary and ended up at the old Oakland Ferry Mole.

Slim's was a fine oasis. The customers were pretty much black, but I savored Slim's like the Club Alabam, Bop City, and the Longbar on Fillmore in San Francisco. Slim's was a kind of tabernacle of the bottle and the blues for any wayward music lover. Slim's was a friendly, hospitable, musical lodging house -- featuring outgoing, middling-stride Black Jazz, and I always loved it.

Our greatest night at Slim's occurred one evening when Ruth and I were hosting a casual al fresco party at our place in the Berkeley hills -- Charles and Jessie Camp (he was a first-chop UC paleontologist) and three or four other couples decided to top off the evening with a pilgrimage to Slim's. We drove down through Emeryville and arrived about a half hour before closing time.

What made the evening so remarkable was that about a minute before closing -- 2 a.m., I think -- all the lights in the house went out. The place was suddenly pitch black -- all the voices died out into a kind of startled silence. There was absolute quiet, and then, slowly at first, and softly, a woman's voice came through the blackness. She began to cry, or sob, accompanied by only a few simple piano chords:

"It's quarter to three -- There's no-one in the place except you and me -- So set 'em up, Joe -- I've got a little story you oughta know" -- and so forth.

Then, as the crooning continued, a deep pink-purple spotlight picked out a woman sitting on a tall bar stool, hunched over, with her back turned to the audience. She continued to sing -- throatily, with growing volume, then plaintively and excruciatingly, that great ballad "One For My Baby and One More For the Road", which song was, I think, the collaboration of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer.

The effect of this showmanship and haunting music was indecribable. It was both painful and majestic. I did not know then, and do not know now, who the lady was. I don't think it was Billie Holliday -- because she may have died by then. It might have been Dinah Washington.

Well, Suzanne, there's only one more for the road.

4. In the middle '50s J.P. Cahn -- a man from Stockton, Montezuma prep school and Stanford University -- was promotion manager of The Chronicle. He was an enormous fellow with a deep and compelling voice and was an accomplished blues singer.

For some reason or other, J.P. was convinced that some of the lesser primates in general, and an old chimpanzee named Bimbo in particular, had a native sense of jazz rhythm and could be taught to play the drums. And so I decided to research Cahn's theory and bring this quasi-scientific theory to a conclusion, once and for all, and then we could get on to more traditional journalistic investigations.

Consequently, one early morning J.P. Cahn, and a friend of his named Hal McIntyre who was,I think, a San Francisco disc jockey, a professional magician and an accomplished clarinetist, and I -- the three of us drove out to the beach and took up a position immediately behind Bimbo's cage on the ocean side of the Fleishhacker Zoo's ape house.

The weather was scrofulous, foggy, with mist dripping from the tree branches. Bimbo was already up and swinging around in his cage. This particular Fleishhacker suite was furnished with a rubber tire swing, an old tree trunk with some worn and desiccated limbs, and a gathering of early ape house decor items. Bimbo swung back and forth; he did in fact seen to bang on the pots or his walls in a kind of random rhythm -- or despair -- I am not sure which.

I don't think I shall ever forget this bizarre scene -- the three of us naked apes standing there, cold and uncomfortable in the miserable low-hanging San Francisco fog, with Bimbo rattling the furnishings and knocking around morosely in his lodging house. It was a somber moment when Hal McIntyre finally managed to fit his clarinet together, and in the misty shroud of inclement Golden Gate fog began to tootle -- not play, but tootle -- about five choruses of the "Tiger Rag". Not another sound out there in the murk but the godforsaken strains of "Hold That Tiger!", the drip, drip, drip of the fog, and an occasional thwack, crack, bump, and thump from poor old Bimbo, swinging back and forth in his cell.

I cannot to this day state with any conviction that the lesser primates are qualified for employment in an American jazz band.

Suzanne, please do whatever you think best with these afterwords. I shall close this unsolicited elegy with a restatement of my abiding conviction that, and to wit:

Among all classes and all professions of human endeavor with which I have been associated in my lifetime, professional jazz musicians are the most gregarious, enjoyable, and generous of all God's children.

Thank you for your patience.

Art

Garbage From The LAFCO Trough

Editorial

Today this newspaper is pleased to nominate and elect by acclamation Mr. Hal Bernson as Ignoramus of the Week. Our hero is a small businessman from the San Fernando Valley who graduated from hustling T-shirts to teenagers to his present exalted seat on the Los Angeles City Council.

For those among our readers who may not be immediately familiar with Mr. Bernson, suffice it to report that this gentleman is just another one of those fumblers, mumblers and misfits who are so frequently encountered feasting at the public trough in Greater Los Angeles. Specifically he is Councilman for his city's 12th District, which gangling municipal plantation includes major portions of hamlets like Canoga Park, Northridge and Chatsworth.

Councilman Bernson's brief appearance in the news spotlight this morning is a result of his bizarre performance during the Local Agency Formation Commission meeting last Wednesday morning. The substance of the LAFCO meeting is reported in detail on the front page by Miss Sharon Hormell, one of The Signal's team of investigative reporters.

Actually, these paragraphs are not concerned with the cityhood committee's grand design for future civic splendor. Instead we are impelled to take public note of Mr. Bernson's asinine remarks charging, in effect, that the Santa Clarita Valley is being victimized by a conspiracy among a trio of rich and powerful local villains, to wit — first: Senator and Mrs. Ed Davis; second: The Newhall Signal, and third: The Newhall Land and Farming Company. Mr. Bernson's intemperate statements, transcribed from a tape of the meeting, are printed below.

Normally these editorial paragraphs ignore the ordinary oracular garbage that profilerates among the palm trees, passion fruit vines and poppy fields of the San Fernando Valley. But Mr. Bernson's claptrap is a dreary continuation of the purple legends that persist here in the Santa Clarita Valley and are kept alive by local gossips who would frighten your children with tales that the Newhall Farming company is a gang of agribusiness vampires who fertilize their orchards with the blood of innocent babes. And these same verminous loudmouths befoul the good name of this newspaper with the malicious story that its editor is a Judas goat for these selfsame Newhall farmers.

These libels must necessarily be put to rest. Therefore, breaking a quarter century's vow of silence, and in order to stuff the councilman's cheeky slanders down his throat, we are publishing hereunder a brief but unexpurgated account of the relationships between The Signal, its editor Scott Newhall and the elephantine Newhall Land and Farming Company. And so, for the record:

Scott Newhall is a great-grandson of Henry Mayo Newhall, the perspicacious California pioneer, auctioneer, railroad builder, and rancher who in 1875 acquired the Spanish land grant properties of the Del Valle family here in the Santa Clarita Valley. Newhall's grandfather was a successful San Francisco importer and exporter. His great uncle Mayo, a notable Bay Area boulevardier, was once apprehended by the authorities in the San Francisco Tenderloin for caning a passerby who addressed him with lewd remarks.

Editor Newhall's father was a jolly San Francisco businessman, part financier, part poet, whose passion for pie-in-the-sky gold mines, sailing yachts, leaky trading schooners and fictitious Hawaiian pineapple plantations ended in disaster during the Great Depression. Mr. Newhall's mother was a gracious Marin County hostess whose legendary Sunday luncheon table included among its guests a constant procession of Korean missionaries, visiting Chinese scholars and actors, Presbyterian divines and impecunious university professors.

In his greening academic years Newhall was discharged from the Tamalpais School for Boys for majoring in afternoon golf instead of conjugating irregular Latin verbs. He was subsequently dismissed from the Lawrenceville Academy in New Jersey for promoting, for profit, bare fist boxing matches between the houseboys. He was released from the Webb School of Southern California for providing his classmates with genuine imported London gin.

Newhall eventually continued his studies at the University of California as an art student and campus political tout, but retired in his senior year because he was able to woo and win as a bride one of his concupiscent instructors. They lived happily ever after for the next 53 years and have managed between them to raise three complicated, but reasonably dutiful, sons.

Deserting the academic cloisters, Newhall entered the marketplace as a photographer for the San Francisco Chronicle, and after 46 years in the service of that august journal, he retired in 1971 as editor.

In the course of his journalistic crusades, Editor Newhall encouraged news readers to respect the natural modesty of animals, and provide clothes for the naked beasts. His papers also fought tirelessly to improve the quality of the swill that was once served as coffee in the cafeterias and chop houses of San Francisco. His papers mounted a campaign, this time successfully, to rescue a handsome young topless waitress, known to her fans as the Persian Lamb, and save her from deportation back to her native Iran.

Newhall's war record was comfortably brief. For approximately a year he served as a war correspondent, mostly with the British Royal Navy, but abandoned that activity when German torpedo boats interfered with his tranquil evenings in the wardroom. He hurried home to San Francisco to spend the rest of the war tending the anti-submarine net in San Francisco Bay, working as ship's cook aboard patrol boat 90061 of the U.S. Coast Guard Temporary Reserve Afloat, Auxilliary Flotilla No. 11. No Japanese submarines were ever caught in this horrid marine contraption that stretched across the Golden Gate entrance into San Francisco Bay. However, Patrol Boat No. 90061 was constantly entrapped in those vicious steel coils.

During his career Newhall has enjoyed occasional triumphs and, rather more frequently, wretched disasters. One such triumph was his public recognition as, "The editor who has contributed most to Northern California drag racing in 1966." On one occasion he was declared a public enemy of the revolutionary government of the Caribbean island of Anguilla.

One of this editor's more illustrious community contributions occurred when he served as track steward at the annual Virginia City camel races in Nevada, a glorious sporting milestone at which John Huston and art connoisseur Billy Pearson rode the two miserable beasts, and the elegant Lucius Beebe, Esq., started the great contest with his pearl handled Colts 45.

Newhall was once apprehended by Scotland Yard investigators when he tried to hijack a paddle wheel tugboat that had been consigned to the British Naval Museum at Greenwich on the Thames. Fortunately he was released when Baron Runciman, a prominent marine antiquarian and chairman of the Greenwich establishment, declined to prosecute him for piracy on the high seas.

Newhall purchased The Signal, which had earlier belonged to the distinguished Trueblood family, in 1963. After 15 years of

hand-to-mouth publishing, he sold The Signal to Mr. Charles Morris, a visionary Savannah media tycoon. Mr. Morris has kindly allowed Mr. Newhall to remain on the premises and he continues to comment from time to time on the passing Santa Clarita Valley parade.

Newhall is editor of The Signal by profession, a machinist by compulsion and a director of the Newhall Land and Farming Company by genealogical descent. In this last capacity he is privileged to sit, upon occasion, among his far more illustrious cousins and outside directors when the Farming Company deliberates the finer points of family ranching. In terms of his very modest portfolio of Farming Company securities, Newhall is but one of approximately 3000 stockholders. His interest is a matter of public record, and he enjoys less than a one percent participation in the company.

Despite Mr. Bernson's idiotic charges of a vast conspiracy among the Farming Company, The Signal and the Davis family, no such triumvirate of plotters actually exists.

Mrs. Bobbie Davis, wife of our standout State Senator, was born Aileen Nash in the west of England, in Devonshire to be exact. At the end of World War II she became the bride of young Fred Trueblood of Newhall, California. The Trueblood family owned The Signal, and years ago Bobbie worked on this paper, both during its Trueblood era and the later Newhall years, as reporter and society editor. Later, after Fred Trueblood's death, Bobbie went to work for Senator Davis during one of his successful campaigns and subsequently granted the Senator her hand in marriage. Neither Scott Newhall nor any other member of the Newhall family is related to Mrs. Davis in any genealogical sense. Furthermore Mr. Newhall's occasional attempts to establish even closer ties with Mrs. Davis have been completely unsuccessful.

So, in conclusion, it is stated flatly herein that there exist no clandestine or otherwise conspiratorial bonds among the Davis family, the Newhall Signal and the Newhall Land and Farming Company. Senator Ed Davis is a great reforming California legislator. The Newhall Land and Farming Company is a large, profit-oriented, occasionally confused publicly-held agribusiness enterprise that has devoted thousands of hours and millions of dollars developing, and sometimes enhancing the Santa Clarita Valley countryscape. Newhall is not a power broker for the rich and famous. Nor is he the Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North of the Farming Company feudal empire.

It was a gross canard for Mr. Bernson to suggest in opprobrious terms that Senator Davis has been abusing his high office to bring pressure on that rollicking gang of bamboozlers known as the Local Agency Formation Commission. And it was most unchivalrous of Mr. Benson to summon Mr. Gary Cusumano to the witness box and cross question him about a supposed incestuous relationship between the Newhall Signal and the mighty Newhall Land and Farming Company. Mr. Cusumano, executive vice president of the company, who is a true pillar of the Santa Clarita Valley community and a widely admired and successful dirt farmer, could be only embarrassed when he was urged to disassociate himself publicly from the curse of the Newhall Signal.

Mr. Bernson should understand that far from being the Svengali of the Santa Clarita Valley, Newhall is occasionally perceived to be a natively generous, compassionate man. Certainly, if Mr. Bernson himself, or for that matter any other passing vagrant, with a heavy heart and a hungry belly came knocking on the Newhall family front door, he would be welcomed and cheered and straightway sent round to the kitchen door to be received by the cook and nourished with a bowl of good hot soup, a loaf of bread and a carafe of wine from the household cellars.

Furthermore our hero for this week would be well advised to stop gabbling about Santa Clarita Valley conspiracies and implying that here behind the battlements of 24000 Creekside Road there lurks a crafty newsmonger who would confound the honest public servants of sweet Los Angeles.

And finally, the councilman should be aware, however, that there does reside within these hallowed journalistic corridors a staff of reporters and editors who have sworn an oath to rid the public offices of America of trashy politicians who pass their days slandering honest newspapermen and gentleman farmers who would build a better future for all the world.

Appendix N.

Herb Caen's Return to the Chronicle

Incidentally, I think that when we were discussing Chronicle columnists and Chronicle circulation promotions, I'm afraid I neglected to tell the story of Herb Caen's return home to the Chronicle. This was a marvelous, rewarding moment for me personally, and it was a unique chapter in the annals of San Francisco journalism. I think Herb's arrival back at the Chronicle was the single most spectacular episode during our battle with the Examiner.

Herb had come to the Chronicle from Sacramento shortly before World War II. Paul Smith was building up his staff of young men-with-a-mission and he was in a hurry. Paul had read Herb's column in the Sacramento Bee--or in the Union, I'm not sure which--and Herb came to work as our radio columnist. My wife Ruth's first job at the paper was acting as Herb's secretary and taking care of the Chronicle's daily and Sunday radio logs. This was 1937 or '38, I think.

Herb became very close to Paul--he idolized Paul, in effect. There was a group of us who used to float around town after work, Herb and Paul and Ruth and I and some others who would hit the night clubs, or listen to jazz--Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong. We used to listen together to the speeches of Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill or Adolf Hitler, or Jack Benny or Charlie McCarthy or W.C. Fields, and so forth. We were dancing and drinking and waiting for a war. Well, World War II put a stop to all this-- it was like hitting the pause button on your VCR machine. Some of us went to war, and some of us kept on writing at the Chronicle. But after the hostilities were over, we all started up again, doing the San Francisco rounds, and preparing ourselves to set the journalistic world, or at least the San Francisco division of the journalistic world, on fire.

Anyway, Paul came back from the war, and Herb went ahead with writing his general column about San Francisco. And since Herb was, and still is, a genius, his column "It's News to Me" became the hottest feature in town. It became by far the most widely--and wildly--read column in any local newspaper. Then after a few years it all blew up and the roof fell in.

Back in 1950 or 1951, during those final, somber chaotic months when Paul Smith's time was running out as editor and general manager of the Chronicle, Herb and Paul found themselves face to face in what was inevitably a difficult and bruising confrontation. No one else knew for

sure what had transpired, but I think that the Examiner had made Herb a fat offer to jump ship from the Chronicle, and that Herb brought it up with Paul and probably asked for as much money--or more--than the Ex was offering. I think that Paul took some personal affront or suffered from some ego pains. The confrontation ended up with Herb's departure from Fifth and Mission and relocating himself down at the old Hearst building at Third and Market.

The Chronicle's circulation at that time--1950 or '51, I think--was around 145,000, and the Examiner was the top gun in the Bay Area with about 212,000. (I am not positive about these figures. However, they are a matter of ancient and infamous record.)

At the Chronicle newsroom, during the restless aftermath of this upheaval, Paul tried to shrug it all off. He took the public posture that columnists, including Herb, could be discovered and developed by brilliant editors. And Paul insisted that columnists should not be tails wagging the newspaper dogs. He also tried to brazen out the circulation impact of Herb's departure, posting on the staff bulletin board the daily circulation reports from both the Chronicle and the Examiner. Unfortunately, this tactic was not particularly successful since, as I recall, the Chronicle circulation remained static, or slipped a little bit, and the Examiner probably gained a few readers.

I was Sunday editor when all this happened. And the paper was really in the doldrums. However, I was very fond of Herb. He had been the hotshot first baseman on the Chronicle's softball team, of which I was the manager and catcher. I knew him well and admired him. And I knew instinctively that historically Herb would always belong on the Chronicle. Herb had signed a four-year contract with Hearst. When I took over from Paul, I knew it was terribly important to keep the door open for Herb to come back someday. Our relationship was really too close, too personal, and I would have been embarrassed to crowd him and tug at his sleeve to come back.

But at some point during Herb's first four-year tour of duty at the Examiner I did send him a brief note, one sentence, more or less: "Dear Herb, I just want you to know that there is a first baseman's mitt hanging up for you in the Chronicle window." And that was that.

Herb renewed his Examiner contract for another four years. But the Chronicle was plugging along with all our promotions and the development of our great writers--Delaplane, Hoppe, O'Flaherty, Art Rosenbaum in sports, Charles McCabe, Count Marco, and Frances Moffat in the women's section. And then, seven or eight years after Herb's blowup with Paul Smith, we really began to catch up with the evil Hearst empire.

It was at about this time that one morning after the daily Chronicle editorial conference in the meeting room next door to my office, Al Hyman--he was one of our greatest editorial writers--followed

me back into my office, and with tremendous, badly-suppressed excitement told me, "Jerry Bundsen has told me that Herb is tired of the Examiner and wants to come back to the Chronicle!" (Jerry Bundsen was Herb's longtime secretary and assistant. He lived down the Peninsula, and had talked to Al as they both rode to work on the old Southern Pacific commuter train to Third and Townsend.)

Well, this was colossally important news, because, since the Chronicle was very hot on the heels of the Examiner, if Herb Caen actually could be welcomed back into our fold, that would mean the Examiner was really suffering its final convulsions. With Herb back home, the Hearstian fortress would be dead, dead, dead. And this was not just exciting, it was a very tricky business.

I never mentioned a word of it, it was such a big, big potential victory. I didn't mention it to Ruth, or for that matter even to Charlie Thieriot, because in the newspaper business people talk. And Charlie Thieriot and Randy Hearst and Charlie Mayer, who was then publisher of the Examiner, were all very good friends, socially. I was terrified that if one word of Herb's possible changeover slipped out, the Hearst people would ducksnap him with such a big, fat, juicy offer that he would not be able to turn it down. Dolly knew about it because she had been in the office when Al Hyman broke the news.

Oh yes, incidentally, I forgot to add that at some point, after Herb had been at the Ex for six or seven years, Dolly had run across him at some party or other and Herb had said, "Doll, I want to give you my private telephone number. Scooter might want it some day." (Herb had always called me Scooter.) So when I got the word from Al Hyman via Jerry Bundsen, I told Dolly to dial Herb's private phone number.

At this time Herb was living in a handsome house on the steep north slope of Russian Hill, on Hyde street, where the cable cars drop down to the pier and Aquatic Park. Herb was married to Sally Gilbert--I think that was her name--a pretty blonde girl. She had been very visible around town as a photographer's model, and had been queen of the Columbus Day festival or something like that. I remember a scene when she was rowed ashore in Queen Isabella's barge and landed on the beach at Aquatic Park, to be greeted by North Beach Italian fishermen dressed up in fifteenth century costumes.

Anyway, I called Sally myself and she invited me over to talk with Herb. I still couldn't believe that Herb was actually ready to come back to the Chronicle. But he seemed perfectly casual about the whole affair. He told me that still, after almost eight years, he simply could not feel at home at the Examiner. Obviously, he was homesick and lonely. At our first meeting Herb seemed perfectly relaxed, but I recall I was still very excited at the prospect, particularly when Herb suggested that we should meet again and that he would bring along a copy of his Examiner contract. When I warned him that we must be very clandestine about it,

Herb agreed, and then suggested that the safest place to engineer the changeover would be Bernstein's Fish Grotto, over on Powell street.

Now, I can't explain my astonishment perhaps, but, to my mind, if a couple of plotters wanted to meet in secrecy somewhere in San Francisco, the last place in the world that seemed sensible would have been Moe Bernstein's seafood palace in the center of downtown San Francisco. This place was a real, genuine San Francisco tourist trap. The restaurant fronted on Powell Street a block or two north of the cable car turnaround on Market Street. The front entrance of Bernstein's was built like a bow of a ship, a kind of replica of Christopher Columbus's flagship Santa Maria. And the tourist customers would come lurching up Powell Street and enter the grotto through a couple of doors that were cut into the galleon's bow, about where the anchor chain hawse holes are normally to be found. Bernstein's was a popular tavern; the food was good.

Anyway, Herb and I did indeed keep our clandestine assignation at Bernstein's, and, as I expected, this meeting was about as secret as a World Series ball game. Moe Bernstein, the dapper proprietor, was obviously excited and honored to have Herb Caen on his premises, and he greeted Herb as if he were King Ferdinand himself coming on board to inspect Columbus's flagship after he had discovered America. So much for top secret negotiations. (However, Moe Bernstein wouldn't have known me from the King of England.) Herb and I started working out the future of San Francisco journalism in the belly of Moe Bernstein's Grotto.

Herb had his Examiner contract with him, and gave it to me. Both Herb and I knew instinctively that he would not--and absolutely could not--make his change and come back to his home on the Chronicle simply for the taste of money. Herb was ready to leave the Examiner because he was homesick--it was as simple as that. However, I was still petrified that something might go wrong with this grand undertaking, and I told Herb we would match his salary, and that would also include a good salary for his assistant, Jerry Bundsen.

You must remember that I was still thrilled with it all. I still had not mentioned all this to anyone else--Ruth was up at Lake Tahoe with the kids, and Charlie was also up at the Lake with his family at their summer cottage. So, I told Herb that I would have Dolly copy his Examiner contract exactly, simply substituting the word "Chronicle" for "Examiner" and changing the dates. And at lunch I tried to press Herb as to exactly when he would sign this magic new contract. I was still somewhat nervous that somehow this projected Chronicle contract might land in Charlie Mayer's lap and the Examiner might outbid us and the whole affair could blow up.

I said, "Well, Herb, when can I pick up the contract?" And he casually stated, "Hey, Scooter, what are you worried about? I'm coming back. I'll just mail the contract to your home address," which was One Hill Road, Berkeley 8, California. So we slinked--or slank or slunk--out

of Bernstein's Grotto with waitresses and cigarette girls and bus boys flowing like lemmings out onto Powell Street in Herb's wake. And I had to sweat out the arrival of Herb's beautiful new contract for the next few days.

I remember I flew up to Reno to join Ruth at a cabin we had rented on Carnelian Bay on the Tahoe north shore near the Nevada state line. But I flew back very early Monday just to get to our Hill Road mailbox for the morning mail. And one of the most pleasant and rewarding sights of my life was to see Herb's Chronicle contract inside our Berkeley mailbox, sandwiched in among the regular junk mail. And I must confess that this particular package was just about the greatest early Christmas present I could give to Charlie and the de Young family.

So that is the long and rambling tale of the single most spectacular demonstration of the Chronicle's recovery during the Examiner-Chronicle war. All of this transpired in late 1957, and by then the Chronicle, I believe, was hot after the Examiner--we were running about 215,000 daily and I think they had about 250,000 or maybe slightly more. The return of Herb Caen was not only a spiritual victory for us; his column was also a really significant circulation bonus.

By the end of his first year back at the Chronicle, Herb wasn't playing first base on the old softball team any more, but his column worked some comfortable wonders. He probably had brought the Chronicle 20,000 or 30,000 new readers, and this more or less meant that the Examiner lost a relatively imposing number of customers. Adding the Examiner's loss to the Chronicle's gain meant something like a difference in a neighborhood of 35,000 to 45,000.

Now, in finishing this long story about Herb, I wish to state emphatically that Herb is the most gifted newspaper columnist I have ever met. He is, I think, unique. He is a beautiful writer. He is far, far different from the old-time gossip columnist. Herb--or I should say Herb's column--is, in itself, possibly the most remarkable daily newspaper column in America, or perhaps the world. His column is actually a miniature newspaper, all by itself. Herb is the town crier of San Francisco. He has choreographed this great city for fifty years. In terms of his own two-column daily paper--"It's News to Me"--he reports the news of the world, he is sports editor, drama reviewer, music critic, and he writes the editorials, and he is still the arbiter elegans of San Francisco cultural life. Herb has not only a brain, but also a mind, and as far as I am concerned, a soul. He cares very deeply about things. And--although I am well aware that many people may not agree-- Herb is vulnerable, and, although it may not always show through, he can be a courtly and humble person. Sobeit.

Scott Newhall
8/29/90

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