## A TEI Project

# Interview of Francine Diamond

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## 1. Transcript

### 1.1. Session 1, April 8, 2008

Collings
: Okay. This is Jane Collings interviewing Fran Diamond in her home on April 8th, 2007.

Collings
: Good morning. 2008, 2008. Thank you. [Laughs] Where does the time go?

Diamond
: I know, when you're having such a good time.

Collings
: We are in 2008 already. So why don't you tell me where you were born, just to start off with?

Diamond
: Okay. I was born July 2nd, 1943, in Los Angeles, very specifically. I lived with my mother [Mary Busch] and her sisters in Boyle Heights, because my father [Jack Busch] and all of my uncles, my mother's brother and brothers-in-law; she had two sisters and a brother. All of the men were actually off at war. It was World War II. My father saw me once when I was three months old before he was shipped out, and I didn't see him again until I was about two and a half. So it was a very matriarchal life for the first few years, because I lived, as I said, with my mother and my aunts and my maternal grandmother and grandfather in Boyle Heights, and each one of my aunts had one baby. So they all managed to have a child before their husbands left for war.

Diamond
: My father actually served as a member of the army, and he was on Normandy Beach on the second group of soldiers that stormed Normandy Beach. I also had my father's family very nearby in Boyle Heights. My paternal grandparents

and his sisters. He was an only son. He had three sisters. So I was really surrounded by grandparents and aunts and cousins of my own age, about six cousins. I was the only girl; they were all boys. It was actually a great childhood, because there were a lot of adults caring for a lot of babies and very young children, toddlers. So there were like a lot of mothers.

Diamond

I remember very specifically my earliest memory is actually my father coming home when I was about two and a half years old. We were living in West Adams, again with my mother's--next door to my mother's parents, and I remember my great-grandmother, who was living at the time, also, and the big memory being, "Your father's coming home," and I didn't know my father. I was two and a half. I'd never seen my father; I had no memory of him whatsoever. I really remember him coming in and he had his army uniform on, and it was quite an amazing first memory, because I don't remember anything else for a long time after that, because I was only two and a half.

Diamond

So in terms of public service, it was a close family, but it was really a working-class, I'd say lower middle-class family. Only one of my aunts, my father's youngest sister, was a college graduate. In fact, she's only thirteen years older than me, so she was probably in college when I was a little girl. My father came back, and he went to work for a linen supply company, and he was their bookkeeper and worked his entire working life until he retired from that job about twenty-five years later.

Diamond

But there was always a lot of talk about politics. My parents and my grandparents always talked about [Franklin D.] Roosevelt and the plight of the downtrodden or the plight of the people who worked hard and didn't have power. So I always did have a sense that there were people that needed to be protected or taken care of, and that Roosevelt and his values were the same values that my family had, although nobody really had the time or the resources to get involved as a volunteer.

Diamond

I was aware later on in my life that one of my grandmothers, my father's mother, was very charitable, and even though she may not have had a lot of resources, there were some resources, and she frequently made contributions, financial contributions. But she always did it anonymously, which I found very interesting. She really wanted no credit for--but was always very generous. They were very involved with I guess it was kind of a Jewish socialistic organization called Workmen’s Circle, which was a--I don't know that much about it, except that its values were really taking care of the community. Every

summer we all went to visit them, because they had a cabin at the Workmen's Circle campsite that was somewhere in Orange County.

Diamond

So the values were very much--not anti-American in any way; I don't mean to suggest that--socialistic in that the community needs to take care of one another and look out for other people who might be less fortunate than you. So that was really the values that I think--

Collings

But you didn't consider yourselves to be among those less fortunate.

Diamond

No. Actually, my family never felt that they needed help. They worked very hard, and as I said, my parents were really lower middle-class. We never lived in a home. We always lived in an apartment. There were certainly always many friends of mine who came from families with much more substantial financial resources than my family, but we never felt that we didn't have enough. None of the women worked then outside the home, and we always felt that whatever we needed, we would have. There was never a question that we would have enough food or clothes, or nobody had to work two jobs. It was just--you know, it was a living. It was a living, and you were able to take care of your children and your needs. There weren't fancy vacations or extras, a lot of extras. But it was comfortable. Nobody worried about whether they would lose their place to live or lose the job. So that basically was pretty much a summary of what it was like as a young child.

Collings

Were your parents born in the United States?

Diamond

Yes, both of my parents were born in the United States. None of their parents were born in the United States. My parents, they both actually, just coincidentally, were born in Detroit and moved as toddlers with their families to California. They met--they both lived in Boyle Heights and both went to the same high school and met in the neighborhood, socially.

Collings

Were there a lot of families from that Detroit neighborhood specifically moving to Boyle Heights, or was that just--

Diamond

Not that I know of. I think that was just kind of a coincidence that that happened. My father's family was more well educated and had more resources than my mother's family. They all came from the Ukraine. My father's mother came from Odessa, and my mother's parents also came from Odessa. My father's mother was the daughter of a rabbi, and she left Odessa when she was about eighteen years old, and all of her family was back there, her siblings and

her father and her stepmother. But she had one brother, an older brother, who had come to the United States and lived in Detroit. She really was very unhappy, because she was brought up by a stepmother who was very unkind to her, so she was anxious to leave. She left really right before World War I. Had she waited much longer, she wouldn't have been able to get out.

Collings

Wow. So this was your grandmother.

Diamond

My father's mother; yes, my grandmother. She had a very interesting story, because, as I said, she was the daughter of a rabbi, and yet her parents divorced, which I thought was kind of unusual in those times.

Collings

Yes, I was thinking that as well. Yes.

Diamond

I never really could find out from her exactly why, and maybe she didn't know, because she was just a very young child when her father and her mother divorced. But her father immediately remarried. Of course, they all had a lot of children, and so the stepmother had a lot of children, and my grandmother, Sarah, was responsible for helping take care of all the babies that came along. She always talked about her cruel stepmother until--you know, for her entire life. There was always these memories that wouldn't leave her that she needed to talk about. So she left.

Diamond

When she was twelve years old--she told me one story that I would never forget--that she and her father and stepmother and all those step-siblings were living in some town. She never saw her mother after the divorce. I think they may have even lived in a different village. When she was twelve years old, one day a woman approached her and asked her if she was Sarah.

Diamond

And she said, "Yes."

Diamond

And she said, "I'm your mother." That was the first time she had seen her mother since her father left and took her and her brother and remarried. So I thought that was just so remarkable.

Diamond

Then she left as an eighteen-year-old; came to this country; did not speak the language; had one brother here; and left everybody she knew and everything she knew.

Collings

What a brave young woman.

Diamond

Yes, really brave, and probably not such an unsimilar story to--dissimilar to others that came over, but just amazing, an eighteen-year-old who had the courage to do that.

Collings

Right. I know.

Diamond

While she was in Detroit, as a young woman, she met my grandfather, who actually came from quite a well-to-do family in what was at the time Austria, that later became Poland after World War II. But he had actually been a graduate of the University of Austria, and he was also Jewish. He came to the United States because his family, they were wealthy food purveyors, and in fact, they provided food to the king of Austria. I think there was some debt owed to them in the United States, and so they sent their son, who had graduated from the university, to come to the United States to see if he could collect the debt.

Diamond

While he was here, he met my grandmother, and they fell madly in love. He had every intention of leaving and going back, but he ended up staying here, and they got married. His parents were just outraged that he would even consider marrying this peasant, because she was uneducated. Even though she was the daughter of a rabbi, women weren't educated. They didn't go to college in the Ukraine, as they did--or I don't know about women, but she was uneducated. She wasn't wealthy like his family was.

Diamond

He didn't go back, and had he gone back, he wouldn't have survived, because his entire family was killed by the Nazis. While they kept saying, "Come back. You should come back," he didn't, because he got married. They had children, and she wouldn't go visit his family because they were so mean to her and didn't approve of the marriage. So my grandfather never went back, and all of his family was literally slaughtered in the streets. He was very entrepreneurial, and he was in and out of the money in the United States, in terms of starting businesses and failing and then trying again, as entrepreneurs do. Anyway, so they had a very interesting story. Anyway, so they had a very interesting story.

Collings

Yes, absolutely. Then it sort of gets to this point in Boyle Heights where, as you describe it, things are so settled and comfortable and very pleasant.

Diamond

Yes. My father's family actually were very comfortable. They had a business, and my grandmother worked with my grandfather, and they were able to afford a very lovely home in Boyle Heights that I remember going to frequently to visit. So their life was a lot more comfortable than--but things did change

because of the depression. I guess my father ended up, instead of going on to college, he went to the war. When he came back, he was quite changed, my mother said. He didn't have any desire to go to school. He's very bright, and he's still--my father's ninety-two, very bright, very well read. But he was very unhinged; not in terms of not being able to function, but just very nervous and very anxious and not very ambitious. I think he just saw too much and would never, has never, spoken about his experiences, ever.

Collings

Well, now they say that so many of those World War II veterans did suffer from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder, but it was never really discussed at the time.

Diamond

Right. I know that my mother said he used to have terrible nightmares when he came home, and when he first came back, he absolutely refused to talk to anybody. I don't even know if he really talked to my mother. But he saw such horrible things, people next to him. I'm sure when they stormed the beaches in Normandy, people next to him were killed, and just the horrors were more than he could ever bear to talk about. He's very well read, but he will not read anything to do with that period of time or the war, because I offer him books all the time, because he likes to read books that I've been reading. He always asks, "Well, tell me what it's about and when does it take place?"

Collings

Oh, dear.

Diamond

I remember there was this wonderful book I read that took place in Italy during World War II, and I knew he would love the book. But he couldn't read it.

Collings

Wow. So does he see any of these films that have come out recently, like Saving Private Ryan?

Diamond

No. No. He won't see those, nothing to do with the war. I mean, I guess it was just too horrific, and it truly had a tremendous impact. He's very solitary, a person who doesn't really need a lot of people in his life. He's very happy to read and to take walks and not communicate a lot.

Collings

Did he ever discuss the Vietnam War with you later on?

Diamond

No. You know, it's interesting--[Telephone rings.]

Collings

Shall I pause?

Diamond

No. I guess we need to see. [Taping interruption.]

Collings

So, yes, I was asking if he--

Diamond

He didn't, no. We never really spoke about it, and there were many opportunities, because I was very much an opponent of the war, and my husband and I went to demonstrations. In fact, my parents used to babysit for our oldest daughter, who at the time was an infant when these protests were going on. There was one famous one at Century City that we went to, and my parents would babysit. My mother would talk about the war and was very against the war, and we shared--and my father wouldn't object. He would listen, but he wouldn't participate. In fact, today when I'll say to him, "Well, you know, I'm supporting [Senator] Hillary [Rodham Clinton], and what do you think about this election," he doesn't like to talk about politics, either. I'm sure he has an opinion. I know he votes. But he's very resistant to anything political.

Collings

Interesting. Yes. Okay, so going back into the Boyle Heights time, how would you describe that neighborhood? I mean, it's really changed a lot. But how was it when you were there?[Taping interruption.]

Diamond

When I was growing up, it was a very mixed community, in that it was very Jewish and also Hispanic. I remember next door to my grandparents' home where I lived were Hispanic families that I don't know whether they were from Mexico or--but it was really socioeconomic. It was a middle-class community. Most of the people were either Jewish or Latino, and everybody kind of just was friendly, went to the same schools. I didn't live in Boyle Heights for that long. When I was about three, we moved to West Adams. My grandparents remained there, but we moved to the West Adams area, which is kind of like around La Cienega and Venice Boulevard, Robertson and Pico, that kind of area. Then we moved a little bit further, and I moved closer to Cattaraugus and Venice Boulevard in the Hamilton High School District.

Collings

How would you describe the West Adams neighborhood when you were there?

Diamond

Well, that's the neighborhood I lived in when my father came home, and I was only two and a half then and I probably only lived there till I was like four or five. So I don't really remember. My memories of Boyle Heights are more going back to visit my grandparents all the time. On the weekends we'd go back to Boyle Heights to visit them. But I was just a baby when I lived there. Most of the time I lived, after West Adams, around age five until I got married,

actually, was around Venice boulevard between Robertson and kind of the Culver City area in the Hamilton High School area.

Collings

When you were growing up, did you have like formal religious education?

Diamond

I went to Jewish religious school for a short period of time. When I was growing up, there were no girls having bat mitzvahs. The first woman to have a bat mitzvah was about sixty years ago or so, I think.

Collings

Oh, really.

Diamond

No, I'm sorry. It was less than that. But nobody had--I mean, no girls had bat mitzvahs, so the only education I had was Sunday school for a few years. I would go to my grandparents' synagogue. We went to services really on the High Holidays, basically to make sure our grandparents knew we were there. My parents were not particularly religious. It was my grandparents who really celebrated the holidays that we all went to. My cousins and my brother and I and all of our families would spend the holidays, Passover and Rosh Hashanah, at my grandparents' and also Friday night dinners.

Collings

But the families did sort of get together for this--what was the name of the group in Orange County? The Working--

Diamond

Oh, in the summer. It was called the Workmen’s Circle.

Collings

Workmen’s Circle, yes.

Diamond

That was an organization that my father's parents belonged to, and it was sort of a charitable organization to raise money, I think, for people who were Jewish who needed help, who were poor. Most people never thought of Jewish people as being poor, but there really were a lot of people who, just like any other religion or ethnic background, who were poverty-stricken. So they were to help raise money for people who needed help with basic needs.

Collings

Yes. But this was not connected to any temple or synagogue.

Diamond

No.

Collings

Okay. You said it was sort of like quasi, sort of socialist?

Diamond

That's my understanding of it. I think it was something that a lot of liberal Jewish people, particularly if they had suffered themselves by living through pogroms in Russia, which three of my grandparents did; they all lived through pogroms in Russia before they came here. That was really the reason they left. None of my grandparents came here because of Hitler; they came before. That was when it was always terrible for Jews, I guess, in Russia. My mother's father, my grandfather, he left because he was drafted to be in the Russian Army. So he left, and his family left. He was one of many brothers and sisters. My grandmother also came here because they needed to escape from the czar and from the horrible times in Russia that found Jews suffering before Hitler, even before Hitler.

Collings

So were they sending money to people in Russia then?

Diamond

Well, my grandfather, one of my grandfathers, had a brother, one brother of all his family that was left, the grandfather who grew up in Austria; it later became Poland. He didn't go back, because he got married here, and all of his family, his siblings, his nieces and nephews, his parents, all perished during the Holocaust. But he had one brother who he found out was able to escape, and so his brother and his brother's wife and two sons were, I think, in France. So he tried desperately to find them, and they definitely communicated in some way. His brother knew his address. In fact, the one thing that my cousins, once they came here, had told me, that the one thing their father told them, "If we ever get separated, the one thing you need to remember," was the address in Boyle Heights of my grandfather, "because that's who we need to go to."

Diamond

My grandfather's family, as I said, was quite wealthy. They were able to escape because they had jewels, jewelry, and actually even some artwork, which they were able to sell to people to give them money so they could escape. So they ended up in France, and my grandfather finally located them, and they ended up coming here when I was about--I think I was fourteen. I remember when his brother and his sister-in-law and the two sons came over. They lived with my grandparents for a while, and then they moved out, and they became very successful.

Diamond

One of my cousins, he's in his seventies. The parents are dead, and his older brother died, but he's still alive. They were very successful here. But, yes, they only were able to get out because my grandfather was able to locate them and was able to sponsor them to bring them over.

Collings

You mentioned that your father was so distressed by his experiences during World War II. How did your grandparents deal with the things that had happened to their families? Did they talk about that a lot with you?

Diamond

Well, my grandfather, whose family died during the Holocaust in Austria, he talked about it a little bit. He certainly let us know what happened to his family. But his main emphasis was finding his one brother and getting him and his family here. My grandparents were also very, very generous to Israel and very, very hopeful about Israel as a place for Jews to be able to go so that this kind of thing could never happen again.

Collings

So that was sort of how they channeled their response, then.

Diamond

Right. That was the one thing, I would say, that all of my grandparents talked a lot about, and any kind of financial help they could give and any kind of donations they made were really to help establish the state of Israel. The one trip I remember that one of my grandparents took--who never traveled abroad; he had really no money--was to go to Israel after it was founded.

Collings

Right. So that was how they talked with you about what had happened to the family. It wasn't so much in terms of specific events regarding this aunt or that uncle.

Diamond

No, no. Well, my mother's family, those grandparents and all of those siblings, they all were here before World War II, and they were very working-class. They were in the building trades. My grandfather was a bricklayer. It was a very close family. I always lived near my grandparents. My mother's sisters and my mother were very close. Even after the war when all the husbands were home, we always kind of lived near each other. So they never really talked specifically about the hardships. It was over. It was like making a life here in the United States.

Collings

All right. So when you were going to school, what kinds of subjects did you enjoy and what kinds of hopes did you have for your future?

Diamond

Well, when I was in high school, at the time--I graduated high school in February of '61. I went to Hamilton High School. It was a wonderful high school. L.A. city schools were probably one of the best, if not the best, in the nation, and we really got a fantastic education, and junior high, too, although that's always a hard time, I think, for kids. So my focus on education would be high school, and I had wonderful teachers. It was a very great social life there,

too, and you could belong to clubs that had to do with mathematics or service, or social clubs. I was a good student. I did very well. I knew I wanted to go to UCLA. I knew that I'd never be able to afford to go elsewhere, and even at UCLA I wouldn't be able to live in the dorms, because my parents couldn't afford that.

Collings

Did you feel like you were being encouraged, as a girl, to get an education?

Diamond

It was never really so much as "You have to do this"; it was just kind of expected. Nobody ever said, "Well, are you going to go to college or are you not going to go to college?" It was pretty much understood that you would go to college, although the expectations for girls was that you would either become a teacher or a nurse or a social worker. No one I know ever said, "Well, I know it's going to be hard to get into medical school, but I'm going to find the one place that lets in women." I mean, it was just not even spoken of, because as far as we knew, women didn't go to medical school, and I think there were quotas not only for women but for Jews, for blacks, for everything. It was very hard to get into. Not that medical school would have been what I would have wanted to do, but in just terms of professional aspirations.

Diamond

There were a lot of smart women. I mean, I remember going to school with some of the smartest women in high school that I have ever known. I did very well in all of the eight whatever they would call the AP [Advanced Placement] classes today--the academically enriched classes, I think they might have been called--for history, for civics, for language, for math, and all of those women became either teachers or nurses or social workers. I remember my grandmother encouraging me to be a teacher, because it would be something to fall back on. Those were the terms.

Collings

In case the marriage didn't work out.

Diamond

Right, because everybody thought you would go to college, you would meet a husband, and you'd be a mother. None of us questioned that. I don't know anyone that questioned it.

Collings

It was a bit early for the women's movement at that time.

Diamond

Yes, exactly. It turned out that, to my great disappointment, I ended up going for a year to community college because the counseling was not so great. Math was the one subject I was not good in. I mean, I was all right, but I didn't do very well in geometry. I had a teacher that was just horrible. She scared the

daylights out of me and many others. I ended up getting one D one semester in math, and I remember my counselor saying, "That's okay. Don't worry about it. You've got like a 3.8." At the time, to get into UCLA you really didn't need more than about a 3[.0], 3.2, and I had way more than that. I had like a 3.8.

Diamond

So I was shocked and horrified to find out that I couldn't go to UCLA, because I should have made up that class in summer school. Now, perhaps it was my fault for not asking more questions, but that was what I thought was told to me. So when I applied to UCLA, and they sent me back, saying, "Well, you've got a 3.8, but you have this one semester D in geometry, and you need to make it up."

Diamond

So I went to L.A. City College for one year and made up the geometry, and I ended up getting an A in it, which was very frustrating in some levels, because I realized I shouldn't have gotten a D. Why did I get a D? I got an A in college. But, in any event, I went to community college. It was fine. I was disappointed. Actually, they were good teachers there. Most of my social life was at UCLA, because I was already dating my husband, who was at UCLA, and had friends there.

Diamond

Then the following year I transferred to UCLA and spent the next three years there, and I got my degree in something that I don't even believe you can get an undergraduate degree in, which is elementary education. So while you had to take all the other courses--and I took a lot of history and anthropology--I took all the courses to become a teacher. When I graduated from UCLA, I had my credential, which now I believe you need to take a fifth year to get your credentials. I had a credential and literally graduated in February of '65 and started teaching like two or three days later. No year off with travel or--that wasn't done at the time.

Collings

No, it sounds like that would probably be unheard of.

Diamond

But I met my husband.

Collings

Now, how did you meet your husband?

Diamond

I actually met him in high school. We both graduated from the same high school; we were in the same class. The senior year we had some classes together, and we started going out around two months before graduation, and pretty much dated all through college, and got married the summer before I graduated.

Collings

That was--

Diamond

We got married in the summer of '64, June '64. He graduated in June of '64. I graduated in winter of '65. That's when they had semester graduations. So we grew up basically together. We both went to the same high school and went to UCLA together, and had similar backgrounds. Our parents were both children of immigrants. Actually, his father was an immigrant.

Collings

From where?

Diamond

From Russia.

Collings

As well.

Diamond

His family all came from the Ukraine as well.

Collings

Oh, they probably knew each other in the old country. [Laughs]

Diamond

Probably. Probably.

Collings

But, now, do you have brothers and sisters?

Diamond

I have one brother, who was born after my father came home from the war, so he's about three and a half years younger than me. So our experiences are somewhat different, because I grew up, my first two and a half years were without a father, living in a very matriarchal family. Then my brother came a year after my father came home.

Collings

What does he do today?

Diamond

My brother is now retired. He was a probation officer for, actually, his entire career.

Collings

How interesting.

Diamond

He graduated from Cal State Northridge and was a probation officer. He lives in Torrance. My father actually lives with him.

Collings

Oh, that's nice. You sort of pointed to how your upbringing was different than his. Do you feel that the matriarchal community that you lived in as a youngster really played a role in your outlook?

Diamond

Well, it's hard to say, except I certainly think I have a view of women as being decision makers and strong. My mother, while she never worked outside of the home, in our home she was very strong in terms of pretty much setting up the scheme of things; you know, what we would be doing, what we'd be eating, where we'd vacation, that sort of thing. So I guess there was also a sense of community, women providing nurturing and kind of leading the way.

Collings

Yes, I can kind of imagine that, if it's a group of women who are responding to one another socially rather than sort of mirroring what the perhaps dominant males in the group are doing socially.

Diamond

Yes, and I would imagine it must have been hard in a lot of ways for them to do it on your own, but having your sisters there doing it with you, and then having the men come home and kind of like having a different--

Collings

Do you remember anything about--I mean, I know you were pretty small, but do you remember anything about that homecoming and how it affected the dynamic?

Diamond

I remember the homecoming. I remember my father coming home. That was my first memory. I don't really remember. Factually, I know that we all then went into living in our own little homes outside of the grandparents'. My grandfather and grandmother, as I said, always lived next door to me, my mother's parents, and so they loomed very large in my life.

Collings

Yes. Okay. So you went to UCLA, and as you said, you never even considered studying something besides being a teacher or a nurse or a social worker.

Diamond

No, I didn't. I mean, I studied a lot. I'm very interested in anthropology and history and literature, so I felt like I got a very good education, and I did get a good education at UCLA. That's been a very important--I think it broadened my horizons and certainly interested me in travel. My husband and I traveled all over the world and still love to travel.

Diamond

So what do you think you might have trained to do if you had been raised in a different era?

Diamond

I probably would have gone to law school. My husband's a lawyer, and my youngest daughter is a lawyer. Both my sons-in-law are lawyers. There are judges in my family, male judges in my family. I have lots of friends now, younger women, who are judges, who went to law school later in life. I certainly could have done that, but I don't know why I didn't. I guess I just enjoyed the things that I ended up doing.

Collings

Yes, it sounds like you were pretty busy. Yes.

Diamond

In some ways, the work that I'm doing now--well, I should back up and say I always told my daughters that the perfect position for me would be to be appointed to be a judge or appointed to be an elected official, because I'm not really sure how much I personally would like to run for office, although I've worked in many other campaigns, helping other people be elected. But as a member of the Water Board, it is quasi-judicial, and I do enjoy being a policy maker. So that's been something I probably would have--had I been younger, probably would have gone to law school; probably would have run for office.

Collings

I see. Interesting. Okay. So how do we make the leap then from you taking a position as a teacher in 1964? What is sort the of next step along the way?

Diamond

After I stopped teaching?

Collings

No, you started teaching in 1964. Where did you get your job?

Diamond

Oh. My first job, my only job, really, teaching, because I taught for just under three years, was with Los Angeles city schools. I had a job in an area that was unincorporated at the time. It's now within the city of Carson. It was south of the airport. I started out as a first-grade teacher. I think I then taught second grade, and then I taught fifth grade. Then when I was pregnant with our first daughter, I left in the middle of the year. My intention was to finish the year, but I was having some problems with the pregnancy, so the doctor said I really needed to not work, because being on my feet was not good.

Diamond

This was the era when the war was going on, and the draft was very much an issue. My husband first was deferred. There was a lottery for the draft, and he was deferred because, first of all, because he was a student. Then they needed more men, so they said student deferments were no longer good, and so it happened that we were married, and so he had a deferment because he was married. Then they stopped deferring people because they were married, because they needed more troops. The only thing that would really keep him

out was if he had a child. That's when--we were ready. Who knows if we might not have waited another year? We were married about two years. But there was no question that he was not going to go to this war, which we thought was wrong, and potentially give up his life for a war that he thought was so horrible.

Diamond

So we were lucky in that I was able to get pregnant. There were many people that we know at the time and many people that I know now who had children at that time, and a lot of the reason was the timing was right, and if it wasn't, the war was wrong. So it was important that we do whatever we could to keep our husbands from having to go over there.

Collings

Right. Yes. So did you sort of belong to a community of people who were opposed to the war?

Diamond

I would say that our social life did not revolve around that, but we didn't know anybody, as I can recall, that supported the war, and that included our families, our parents, our grandparents, who were still alive at the time, our siblings, our friends. Nobody. In fact, I have to say, sadly, that we didn't really know any people who served, and I say that sadly because, you know, it was too bad that people who served didn't have the support of friends who were sorry that they had to go, or supportive of them personally but sad that they had to go and serve. But most people we knew--now, that probably means we had a very limited social circle, and maybe that's the case for most people, in that we talked to people who had similar values. But I didn't know anybody, and it probably would have been hard to be friends with people who were supportive of the war.

Collings

Right. Yes, definitely.

Diamond

So, I mean, I guess it's not unlike today. I would say I'm not really close friends with anybody who supports being in Iraq. It was really, I guess, a values thing.

Collings

Although many people have changed their view on the Iraq War, but you're suggesting that among the people that you knew, you were against the Vietnam War from the start.

Diamond

From the very beginning. There was never a time that I believed or that my friends or my family believed that it was right to go into Vietnam. It was a part of the world that was having their own internal problems, and what we did was make it worse.

Diamond

In fact, just as an aside, my husband and I were just in Vietnam last year, and traveled there. It was the first time we'd been there since the war in Vietnam; I mean, we'd never been there before. It was amazing to meet all of these people, our guides and others, that were the children of people who had lived through the war, and to see that they actually like Americans and don't hold any hostilities towards us, even though we would understand if they did.

Collings

Yes, that's right. Yes. We certainly would. Okay, so your first child was born, and you quit work. Now, would you have been able to continue work as a teacher after your pregnancy began to show?

Diamond

Yes. They knew I was pregnant, and I told them that I--it was September when I went back to school, and I wasn't due until April, so I was going to work until January, until the end of the semester, and I already let them know that we needed to get a substitute for the second half of the year. There was no problem with doing it. It was just most people didn't work up until the last minute like they do today. But they wouldn't have asked me to leave.

Collings

Okay. All right. So there you are; you're at home with your first child.

Diamond

Yes. My husband graduated from law school just a couple of months before she was born. We lived in Westwood near UCLA. He went to law school at UCLA as well as undergrad. He graduated a little early, because he was anxious to get out and start working. So there weren't as many job opportunities in the middle of the year, because most law firms would come and hire people after they graduated in the summer. That was much more usual, and there were only a few people who worked hard to get out a little earlier. So the firms that were interviewing were not as abundant, or there weren't as many. He was a very good student. He was on Law Review. He wanted to work someplace where there was no air pollution, because he was always very interested in smog and doing what you could to get rid of it and not living where it was polluted.

Diamond

So he interviewed with a firm that was in Long Beach. We had one car, and we rented an apartment in San Pedro that was about twenty minutes from his work. So we moved there about two or three months before our first child was born, and it was really very isolated. It was terrible.

Collings

I was just going to say. I mean, you were used to this wonderful community of [unclear] children, and here you're stuck down there with no car.

Diamond

I was used to being in Westwood near UCLA and having friends, and we had one car, which he needed for work. So once she was born, it was very isolating, and I told him there was no way I could stay down there. In fact, I used to sometimes get up in the morning, with this brand-new baby, drive him to work, and come back, so I'd have a car so I could drive to the west side to visit my family or see friends. So we lasted living down there for about six months, and then we decided this was terrible for me, and he would do the commuting, because I was driving up so much. So we thought we'd rent a place maybe halfway between, and we couldn't--we realized we might as well move to Santa Monica, and he'd drive.

Diamond

Of course, traffic was not that bad in those days. It was not as big a deal to drive on a daily basis to Long Beach from Santa Monica as it is today. So we moved back to the west side, and then in about a year he went out on his own and started his own practice.

Collings

So he had had a long-term interest in air pollution.

Diamond

Yes. He actually was the first person I knew that ever really talked about environmental issues. It was not anything that I was that attuned to. It wasn't one of the social justice issues that I might have been interested in, like--well, anti-war was the first thing, and poverty and those things.

Collings

Yes. Civil rights.

Diamond

Yes, and Civil rights, definitely. I was very involved in Robert [F.] Kennedy's campaign, as was my husband. So the environment was not an issue that most people talked about, but he was concerned about air pollution. In fact, the reason he left his law firm after only working there for about a year was because they represented a lot of major oil companies. It was an international maritime law firm, and they represented Shell Oil and Arco and Exxon. Any oil company, you name it, they represented them. His long-time plan, since he had been in law school, was to bring a lawsuit to sue all of the polluters in the basin of Los Angeles for air pollution. So he needed to leave the firm because he was going to sue their clients.

Diamond

So that was sort of the beginning of my introduction to the idea of environment and environmental law, and that as an idea of social justice as well.

Collings

Right, right. Which is, I mean, in terms of broad public understanding, environmental justice is something quite new. Just where did he come up with these ideas? Because this was very early on.

Diamond

He saw the damages. It was really just like a health issue to him, like not "I want you to stop doing this because you're hurting yourself." It was because "I don't want to breathe this stuff. I don't want my family to breathe it. I don't want to have to have this stuff in the air. It's going to kill us." So it was really sort of a public health way of looking at air pollution, which is really, I think, one of the reasons the environmental movement has become more successful over the years, is that if you can engage people with the idea, "If you turn on your tap, and the water is not healthy--which it is, by the way--that can hurt you, and it can hurt your kids, so we have to do whatever we can to protect the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, or the water that we swim in, because it impacts us all." It's not just the endangered species, although that's important, that's not how to get people to relate to it.

Collings

Right, right. Yes, you have to sort of get to that self-interest part.

Diamond

Yes. It's not the endangered red frog that the person who doesn't care about the environment is going to get involved with. It's, "Oh, my god, you know, my kids have asthma. Maybe there's a connection there."

Collings

Yes, that was very much what happened. We were talking briefly about the Stringfellow Acid [Pits] campaign, and that's precisely how the people in the community who were not politically involved, as a rule, got involved. It was specifically having to do with the kids' health, local kids and their health, yes.

Diamond

Yes, once you make that connection, then you can make the connections to the, "Well, you know, if the least tern, the smelt, or the steelhead salmon are endangered, that's just up the food chain, or down the food chain, from us. We're all endangered if we lose species." But you have to make that personal connection, I think, first.

Collings

Right. That's right, especially if there's going to be some kind of economic impact.

Diamond

Right.

Collings

So how did you get involved in the political campaign of Robert F. Kennedy, you said?

Diamond

Well, I remember very much being at UCLA when John [F.] Kennedy was president, and he was the first person politically that was ever inspiring to me, and to a lot of people. I mean, it was always interesting. It was interesting to listen to his press conferences. We always loved his press conferences, because he was smart, and he was articulate, and he was charming. It was the first time that there was somebody who we could sort of think, "Oh, yeah, I understand what he's saying." It wasn't, you know, [Dwight D.] Eisenhower; it wasn't [Richard M.] Nixon; and it wasn't somebody who had had--even though, you know, he supported the war in Vietnam, it was a diff--it was interesting. It kind of made the connection that you could get involved in politics and you could make a difference, and that there were people who maybe would change things.

Diamond

So, anyway, then when we were at UCLA, he was assassinated, and that was just a devastating experience.

Collings

What are your memories of that?

Diamond

Oh, that was just devastating. I mean, as I said, we admired him. Everybody, you know, pretty much admired John Kennedy, not just our generation, but our parents' generation. He was just an exciting figure that was intelligent and made people pay attention to what was going on.

Collings

Yes, I think that's a really key point.

Diamond

Yes, just paying attention to it. So I was at UCLA, and I remember meeting my husband. We either had a class together or met afterwards and were walking down. I was living at the dorm that semester; there was one semester I lived at the dorm. And bumped into somebody we knew as we were walking, and he said, "Did you hear what happened? John Kennedy has been shot." It was like--I remember going to the Student Union and going to the television, and just everybody just being glued. It was like the whole weekend, it was like a--I don't know whether you'd call it a wake. It was just a tremendous weight on everybody. Nobody really talked. It was quiet. Televisions were on all over. Everything stopped. The whole country seemed to come to a halt.

Diamond

Then I think I went back to the dorm on Sunday or Monday, and I remember just watching the funeral in the dormitory with everybody, and it was just probably the saddest moment I think I can remember in terms of something happening in the country that affected everybody. You know, at UCLA it was

just horrible. It was like horrible. It was like a big funeral. Nobody talked. It was just quiet and somber.

Collings

Yes, I could imagine it having a particular impact on a college campus, because, as you said, this was somebody who seemed to be of a certain class, of a certain type, and that college students could probably really relate to this kind of person, and think of him as one of them and somebody who could inspire them to participate.

Diamond

But it wasn't just the college; it was our families, too. It wasn't like going home, and our parents [unclear]. It was really almost like if you were a Democrat and I should say that almost everybody that I went to--I went to a high school where 99 percent of the people were Jewish, and 99 percent of the people were Democrats. I always thought that--I mean, it was kind of ridiculous, but it was almost like shocking to find somebody who was Jewish who was a Republican. It wasn't until later in life that I realized there are a lot of people who aren't Democrat that are Jewish, and people who are Democrats who aren't Jewish. You know, it was kind of like it was a huge community, but everybody came from the same background. In some ways, it was like a ghetto.

Collings

That's interesting. I didn't realize that Hamilton High was 99 percent Jewish.

Diamond

At the time, yes.

Collings

What was the other 1 percent? Do you happen to know?

Diamond

Christian, you know, Methodist, Presbyterian.

Collings

White.

Diamond

White. In my class of 360, there was one black person. It was all white. It was basically a white school.

Collings

Okay. So it was because of the shock of the assassination that you became involved in politics?

Diamond

Well, actually, no. I didn't become involved in politics because of John Kennedy. I guess I was much more moved by Robert Kennedy. When he decided to run for office, it was after [Eugene] McCarthy had already decided to run for office. I was not that excited by McCarthy. I certainly realized he was intelligent. He was very liberal. What he was saying sounded right, but

personally, he seemed kind of effete, and I didn't feel a personal connection to him. But Robert Kennedy was so inspirational, and I felt that he could--he was a much more--he was changed, I guess, by the assassination of his brother, so that he seemed much more human. His brother was almost like up on a pedestal, and he seemed much more human and compassionate. He was a very compassionate person.

Diamond

My husband and I went to see him when he was speaking at a rally at the Greek Theater when he had first announced he was running, and he was fabulous. I mean, we were just like, "Oh, my god, we're definitely going to support him." We hadn't been involved in any campaigns ever, so we both volunteered in his campaign, and went to some events. My husband drove people around; not Bobby Kennedy, but other electeds who were here for the election. In fact, we were at the Ambassador Hotel the night that he was assassinated.

Collings

Ah, really.

Diamond

In fact, up there, I don't know if you noticed it, but I have in that case a hat that he signed when we were volunteering at some event. So the night of the election, the primary at the Ambassador Hotel, our child was just a baby; it was 1968; she was born in '67, and we left her with a babysitter. We lived in an apartment in Santa Monica. We went with our neighbors, next-door neighbors, who also had a baby, to the Ambassador for this rally, because we wanted to be there for this big rally. We had to get home by eleven, because our babysitter was in high school and had to be up. So we left before Robert Kennedy came out to speak, because, you know, people were just waiting and waiting and waiting.

Diamond

We came home, and we turned on the television set, and while we were watching it on television, he was killed. But I know people that were there in the Ambassador as well. I mean, we would have stayed if we didn't have to get home for the babysitter. That's when I really thought I'd never--I said, "I don't even want to have another child. What a terrible world we're living in to be able to have this happen." But, fortunately, we did have another child. But, I mean, it was very depressing, very depressing. It was just like--I never thought I'd get involved with another political campaign, and really didn't for a while. But the war was really what kept us involved and getting more involved in the anti-war movement.

Collings

Now, do you have any particular memories of the Martin Luther King assassination, which was about the same time?

Diamond

Yes, I certainly remember it vividly, just because it was not that much--I mean, it happened before Robert Kennedy, of course, was assassinated. I remember the Civil Rights March, and I had friends from UCLA who actually went to the South to help register voters. It was horrible. I remember it being just shocking that it would happen yet again, after John Kennedy, that Martin Luther King would be assassinated. We were stunned and saddened. But I have to say that Robert Kennedy, it was worse, in a way, because it was, "Everybody is being killed," you know. Every time a good person--

Collings

Yes, exactly, yes.

Diamond

Martin Luther King was--I guess, you hope that this was not going to happen again; that we would never see this happening. You saw John Kennedy and then Martin Luther King. But when it happened again not that much later--

Collings

The third time, yes.

Diamond

--it was like, "God, this is really a terrible place. This is a terrible country. How can we kill all these wonderful people?" So I didn't really get involved politically for a while, but just as an anti-war protestor.

Collings

Going to marches and that kind of thing?

Diamond

Yes, going to marches. But then in 1970 my husband actually decided to run for state legislature, for state assembly, and he came very close to winning. It was a Republican incumbent in this area. We already had moved to a small house in the Palisades. So we got involved when we moved to the Palisades, because he wanted to run for state assembly, which he did, and we got to know people. There was a group called the Palisades Democratic Club, and the Palisades was not that Democratic at the time. So we met a lot of people with similar interests who were people who were against the war, who cared about improving our country, and that's how we got involved, because we literally got involved in local politics.

Collings

Yes, and that's where you begin the No Oil, Inc., story.

Diamond

Yes, that's right. He ran in 1970, but the No Oil started around 1968. So, yes, it was local community involvement in a local environmental issue. So that was our beginning of politics, getting involved in local issues, which I think is sort of the way a lot of people start. Either it's a Board of Education issue, public

school issue, community issue; it's something that you care about and live near being threatened.

Collings

Right. So shall we pick that up for next time?

Diamond

Sure. Yes.

Collings

Okay. All right.

Diamond

That went fast.

Collings

Okay.

### 1.2. Session 2, April 17, 2008

Collings

Jane Collings interviewing Fran Diamond in her home, April 17th, 2008.

Collings

Good afternoon, Fran. We said we would start off with your move to Pacific Palisades and your initiation into environmental causes through the No Oil, Inc., group.

Diamond

Yes. Well, in 1967 my husband and I moved to Pacific Palisades with our then eighteen-month-old daughter. We had been living in Santa Monica, renting an apartment at the time, and were very much a small family concerned with the things that small families are concerned with, which is mainly their housing, their child, and their very immediate issues. I was pregnant at the time with our second child, and we had hoped to stay in Santa Monica, but actually could not find a house that we could afford. This was, again, 1967. We were looking for a house that was under $50,000, to set the time in terms of what everything was like then with their real estate.

Diamond

We couldn't find a home under $50,000 in Santa Monica, so we decided to look in Pacific Palisades. Actually, I think it was under 40[000], and we found a little house that was $39,500, so we took it. We moved to the Palisades, and that was really the reason we moved there.

Diamond

Not long after we moved to Pacific Palisades, my husband noticed an article in the Los Angeles Times that talked about some kind of a land swap that was happening along the coast in L.A. with an oil company, Armand Hammer's Occidental Oil, and he thought, "That's so odd. Why would the City of L.A. be

swapping land?" And the land they were swapping was coastal land, right across from Will Rogers State Beach. So, just being curious, he did a little investigation, and found out that there was an idea that the oil company had to drill for oil to see if there was any potential oil in this area. It would be slant drilling to go underneath PCH and into the Santa Monica Bay to see if there were oil reserves along the Santa Monica Bay. This was something that was of grave concern to both of us, because we thought, "Oh, my gosh, there are going to be oil drilling along the coast and the Palisades where we've just moved?" We cared so much about making sure we were living in a place that was healthy and not toxic.

Diamond

So he and I actually went to some meeting of the local homeowners or residents association. The issue was brought up, and just to summarize it, it eventually formed a nucleus of people that formed an organization called No Oil, Inc., whose purpose was to stop the possibility of oil drilling by Armand Hammer in Pacific Palisades at this particular site, which was along PCH on the land side of Santa Monica Bay. It turned out to be an epic battle of David versus Goliath. What we thought would take not that long to educate people about what a bad idea it would be to have oil drilling along the coast, let alone in an area that had suffered massive landslides about fifteen years earlier, at the very base of the site where a landslide had occurred, and it was a landslide that killed two people.

Diamond

It turned out that it was a battle within the city, ending up going before the city council and various committees, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. It was a back-and-forth thing. Went to court. We sometimes won; we sometimes lost. After twenty years where we hit the end of the road where it looked like we could go no further, and the City of Los Angeles was, in fact, approving oil drilling, and this included the mayor of Los Angeles at the time, Mayor Bradley, Tom Bradley, who had been a hero of many of us, including myself, when he ran for mayor. The second time he ran for mayor, he won, and one of the main reasons he won and what one of his biggest issues was, that he would never allow oil drilling in Los Angeles, whereas the person he was opposing, the current mayor, was in favor of it.

Diamond

Anyway, he did change his mind. At the end of this twenty-year battle, he was influenced by the oil company that they would do enough mitigation to offset any harm the oil drilling could possibly bring, that he supported it. So we had no alternative at the time, and so the group of us who were the No Oil people, and a lot of people who joined us--it did become a much larger organization that was joined not only by the people who live in the Palisades but other

people in the city of L.A. and Malibu and other people along the coast, even in Santa Monica and other coastal areas, who thought oil drilling along the coast was a very bad idea. We also had people in the community who were celebrities, such as James Garner, who was a well-known actor, and Walter Matthau, and elected officials such as our local congressman and [Governor] Gray Davis, who at the time, I think, was in the assembly; Mel Levine, who was our congressman; all supporting us not wanting oil drilling, who thought it was a very bad public policy and a very bad idea.

Diamond

So, as I said, we came to the end of this battle where we were losing, and the city had okayed it. So we decided to put an initiative on the ballot. That was the only way that we would be able to stop it, is if there was a vote of the people in the city of Los Angeles, because this was going to occur inside the boundaries of the city of Los Angeles. We put an initiative on the ballot. It was called Proposition O. Every single major law firm in the city of Los Angeles was retained by Occidental Oil, including many lawyers who were personal friends of ours, working for these law firms to do whatever they could over the course of the years and through this initiative to make sure that this Occidental Oil did drill for oil here at the base of Pacific Palisades.

Diamond

They were very clever in their political assessment, because instead of just raising money to oppose Proposition O, they actually put another ballot initiative on, called Proposition P, which was a very smart political strategy, because it became a choice of, if you voted for Proposition O, which they portrayed as bad for the environment, even though that wasn't true, their political strategy and ad said that it would be bad for the environment, but Proposition P would be good for the environment, and in fact, it would bring police and all kinds of other benefits, in an effort to confuse the voters. People were very confused. They didn't know whether they should vote yes on O and no on P, or vice versa. It was very confusing, and therefore it seemed as if we had no hope of winning. They outspent us--this is in 1988--by millions and millions of dollars.

Diamond

But somehow or other the people of the city of Los Angeles, the voters, realized what was up, and we won. So that was the end of a twenty-year battle, by putting it before the voters. Even though we were outspent and outmaneuvered, we prevailed, and because of that, there is a permanent ban on offshore oil drilling--I mean, onshore oil drilling along the coast of the city of Los Angeles. So there never can be oil drilling within the city of Los Angeles, and therefore, there has never been oil drilling. Occidental was defeated in this effort, and it was probably one of the most satisfying experiences for me. I can't

remember ever feeling, as a person who has been very involved in politics and in electoral politics, ever feeling so satisfied by a vote of the people, who, because of I'm not really sure what; because they were well educated over twenty years. Somehow they knew that voting for Proposition O was the right thing to do, and voting against it was going to be not in the best interests of the environment or the millions of people who visit the beach all year long.

Collings

Do you remember anything about the information campaign that came out around the time of the proposition? I mean, how you got the word out? You mentioned that you were outspent, so I'm just wondering what the strategy was.

Diamond

We did do political mailing. We probably spent about $3 million at the time, and they spent, I think, about 10 [million] to $12 million. I could have my numbers wrong, but there were several million dollars spent. We did have access to political electeds who were the elected officials representing our area, our city councilman, Marvin Braude, who was a true hero; Zev Yaroslavsky, who was also on the city council; our congressional--all of our local electeds, Gray Davis, Mel Levine, they were all able to get free media by virtue of the fact they would hold press conferences. Whenever we could, we shamelessly used the celebrities who were on our side, like Walter Matthau and James Garner and Ted Danson and Jeff Bridges.

Diamond

Lots of people who had an environmental interest who really realized how terrible it would be and how it would damage this community of Pacific Palisades and the coastal area of L.A., which was really a very special place. Many people, including myself, grew up, even though we didn't live here, going to Will Rogers State Beach, and the idea of having a hundred oil wells, which is what they talked about, right there across the street from the beach, and the smell that it would bring, and, of course, all of the experiences that were had in Santa Barbara because of oil spills, I think people just really got it that oil drilling and the coast and the bay and the Santa Monica beach and their enjoyment of this very special place that was probably the most precious place in the city of Los Angeles, which is the Santa Monica Bay, was threatened, and nobody wanted that to happen.

Diamond

So we didn't just get the votes of people who live along the coast, because, really, the coastal areas of the city of Los Angeles are pretty small, because people from Santa Monica couldn't vote. People from Malibu at the time was not part of the--you know, it was an unincorporated county. None of the coastal cities could vote. It was only the city of Los Angeles, and it didn't matter where you lived. If it was inland, if it were people who didn't get to be lucky enough

to enjoy the coastal area on a regular basis, they realized that it was an asset to them, and it was a place they loved, and they wanted to protect it. So we did have--really, we had elected leaders and the commonsense of the people in the city of Los Angeles, that it made no sense to drill for oil along the coast.

Collings

Right. Now, how did the group maintain its momentum for twenty years? That's a long time.

Diamond

Garage sales. The Pacific Palisades, which was really the heart of where No Oil members came from, because it was the most directly threatened community, is a very unusual place in the city of Los Angeles in some ways, in that it's a cohesive community. It has a center. People walk to it. There is a library, a post office, a main center of town. So there is a sense of community here.

Diamond

It's not, like so many areas of Los Angeles, where I've lived all my life, where there isn't a sense of a center. There is a real sense of a center, and something of being a very special place, because of its beauty and its connection to the ocean, that we need to protect it. So I think that was something that kept No Oil going. People really wanted to protect the open space, which, of course, the Santa Monica Bay is part of it, and that they didn't want their community threatened by this horrible eyesore and contamination of the water and the soil surrounding it.

Collings

So who were the core founding members, and did this core group keep it going throughout, or did this shift?

Diamond

It was amazing in that there was a core group that, even to this day, are making sure that this can never happen in any other place in the Palisades. There's been some concern that perhaps there would be an interest in drilling for oil in Temescal Canyon. So there is a group of people, my husband, Roger Diamond, is one of them. There was Nancy Markel, Barbara Cohn, Frances Shalant [phonetic]. I don't remember everyone's names, but there was probably a core group of people, maybe fourteen, eighteen people, who worked very hard, who sent out a newsletter. There would be garage sales and parties.

Diamond

People like Jim Garner and his wife at the time--he's no longer living; Rita Moreno, who was very involved; Susan Bridges, who's married to Jeff Bridges; they all were willing to really put themselves out, whether testifying at city hall or raising money, having parties. Jeff and Susan Bridges had a fundraiser at their house, which I thought was quite remarkable, because, you know, people like that allowing anybody who could spend $500 at the time to come into their

home. They had young children. It really showed the dedication and commitment they had.

Diamond

So I think it took that core group of people and their families, because I was very involved, too, for a long period of time, bringing young children to meetings, and going to city hall, and whatever it was; going to Coastal Commission hearings. My husband, as a lawyer, volunteered his legal services for years, all the way to appealing the cases that were lost at one level, the superior court levels, appealing it all the way up to the state supreme court. There was just a lot of volunteer effort by a number of people. New people would come, and some people would move away. But it was tremendously satisfying to see the commitment of people working together, no matter whether they were people who lived in an apartment or had a huge home, and whether they were famous or not famous. They just had this sense of it was the wrong thing to do, and they wanted to protect their community.

Collings

Would you hold regular meetings, or would you hold meetings as events arose?

Diamond

No, there were regular meetings. There were probably monthly board meetings, and sometimes if things occurred, there would be more often board meetings. But it was organized. But it was a group of small people who really made an enormous impact. Without them, without this group of people and without No Oil, there is no question in my mind that we would have oil wells right now at the base of Temescal Canyon, across from Will Rogers State Beach, which was a terrible idea, the idea of the smells; the potential successive landslides that could happen; the accidents that could happen to cars driving on the [Pacific] Coast Highway if there was a spill or if there was a landslide; the smell that would be coming to the beachgoers and the residents who lived above the oil wells.

Diamond

It's just unbelievable and unthinkable that this would ever be a place to put oil wells, especially today when we know how much our country needs to stop depending on oil. Although this would be a source of local oil, we need to be thinking of ways to have renewable energy resources, and ruining a beautiful environment in order to have oil so that we could be driving our cars was just the worst possible idea.

Collings

Did the oil crisis of the early seventies pose a challenge to the group, that you recall?

Diamond

I'm sure it did. I know that people use that argument, because we all waited in line and got in line at gas stations to fill up, because we thought there wouldn't be enough. But it didn't seem to make any difference. I guess nobody really thought that this oil--in fact, we knew that the amount of oil that they were talking about drilling for was such a small amount of oil in terms of the needs of our country for oil, that it made it even more disastrous to think of ruining a precious natural resource for this small, pitiful amount of oil. In fact, nobody has tried to get that oil in any other way. If it's out there in the Santa Monica Bay, no one has attempted to get the oil in any other form by going out to platforms. There was never any suggestion.

Diamond

In fact, what I was told by people who, I think, really had an insight, because of Armand Hammer's connection to lawyers in the local community, it really became a personal matter for him.

Collings

Oh, very interesting.

Diamond

He didn't want to be told he couldn't do this. It really wasn't because this was the only place Occidental could get oil and it was critical that this oil be accessed, but it was a matter of not being told what he could and couldn't do by a bunch of environmental activists who lived in the neighborhood.

Collings

Wow, that's interesting. So when the group finally won, was there some sort of culminating event, do you remember?

Diamond

I remember the night of the election and hearing that we were winning and being shocked, because, frankly, when I woke up that morning, my husband and I both got up, and we both looked at each other, and we said, "We can't possibly win. Why are we even hoping? Look at the money that's been spent and the television commercials." I mean, they had commercials that were unbelievable. I mean, we couldn't afford television commercials. They were just spending millions and millions of dollars, and it seemed to be, we thought, making an impact, because it indicated to people that if they did not want oil drilling along the coast, they should vote yes on Proposition P and no on Proposition O, which is exactly the opposite of what they should do, because if P won and O lost, there would be oil drilling today.

Diamond

Somehow or other, the people got it, and we won. So when we found out that we won, we actually went to the--I remember driving to the headquarters of I guess it was the political campaign consultant's office, where all the electeds and all the people were going to go if we won. So it was quite thrilling and

surprising. We were stunned. We really had no clue. It wasn't like there were polls done to let us know that we were winning. But we managed to win, and I don't remember exactly how much we won by, but it wasn't 1 or 2 percent. It was probably more like 6 or 7 percent. It was quite stunning and surprising and wonderful.

Collings

Yes, that must be. Did this group, No Oil, Inc., have any other activist issues, or this was a group that was only focused on this one particular--

Diamond

Only focused on this issue. Only focused on this issue. We didn't have resources to do anything but, and it was a single issue, and it was necessary, and we got the right results because of it, I think.

Collings

Yes. Did the group disband at that point?

Diamond

No, actually it's kept together. They don't meet regularly at all, but they still have their board of directors and their bylaws, and the reason for doing that is that they want to be prepared in case there's ever another threat to oil drilling here.

Collings

So the group does meet regularly.

Diamond

My husband and I have not been meeting as part of it. I don't think they have monthly meetings, but they still have a group, and if there are ever anything that they think could be a potential threat, they would have a meeting ad hoc, I think, more than a regularly planned one.

Collings

Right. Is it still called No Oil, Inc., at this point?

Diamond

No Oil, yes. Yes.

Collings

Okay, great. All right. Well, you said that you wanted to sort of go on in the chronology beyond No Oil, Inc.

Diamond

Right. Well, No Oil was really, for me, kind of a launching pad into being an environmental activist. I had always been somewhat of an activist. As I mentioned, I protested against the war in Vietnam, and I was involved in political campaigns of Robert Kennedy and local electeds. But as a result of No Oil, I began to realize how the environment was really an organizing factor, became an organizing factor for me, in terms of political involvement, because I realized that if you take your eyes off of something that's very important,

whether it's the coast, the beach, the bay, the air, or the water, something can change dramatically that forever changes it, that you can never get back.

Diamond

So a couple of years after the No Oil win, the initiative in 1988, I was asked by Gray Davis, who I had met--I had met him years ago, but had worked with him on the No Oil thing. He asked me to come to work for him in his office, his L.A. office of the state controller's office, to be a special assistant on the environment. That was a result of our working together on No Oil.

Diamond

I had the time. At the moment, I had the time. I was actually interested in doing an internship. I was getting my master's degree, and so I decided to do an internship there, and stayed on after my internship and after my master's for a couple of more years. At that time I was able to really learn a lot about various environmental issues around the state.

Diamond

One of the big issues that I worked on--it was probably the biggest issue--was an issue of siting of a low-level radioactive nuclear waste site near the Colorado River in a place called Ward Valley, which was near Needles, California. When it came to my attention, really by a phone call from a local person, who was very upset about the idea that there might be a low-level radioactive waste, which meant all waste other than the fuel rods from nuclear plants, the most nuclear radioactive material. Everything but that would be buried. That means medical waste, all kinds of radioactive waste, that is considered low-level, some of which actually could live for many, many years; some of it would be no longer radioactive in a matter of six months.

Diamond

But they would bring it all from various states. The United States of America was divided into compacts for burying nuclear waste, and it had already been decided that Ward Valley would be the place where they would bury waste from about six or eight states within the United States. We're talking about Colorado and, I believe, Texas, maybe Idaho, and all of it would come to Needles, California, right near the Colorado River--I think it was twenty miles away--which is the source of the water supply for many of us in California and other states as well, and bury it there. This was already a decision, but local people near Needles were calling the state controller's office, because they were very concerned about the danger that it might pose.

Diamond

It was something that we thought, "Well, how can we change this?" The Congress had actually voted on this. This was a statewide--I mean, a national decision, where to bury the waste at six different sites within the United States. But the reason that this came to the controller's office is that the controller is

one of three votes on a commission, the State Lands Commission, and they have jurisdiction over many decisions. So Gray Davis was one of the three members, and since I was a special assistant on the environment, I got the phone call.

Diamond

I brought it to him and the staff and said, "This is really something that we should look into." I really pushed on it a lot, because I thought it was a very bad idea as well. It was very hard to get the kind of concern across at first, because it's very difficult. The State Lands Commission was already prepared to make this happen, and the Congress of the United States had decided that this would happen. So it took a while for me to really get all of my research in place and then to meet with the state controller. He realized, after I was able to brief him on it, and he had lots of people from around the state of California, environmental activists, who were very concerned about it, that this was a very dangerous place to site this.

Diamond

That also took a couple of years to really change. We had the nuclear industry. This wasn't just one oil company. This was the entire nuclear industry, the University of California that needed a place to store its radioactive waste, as well as all kinds of other laboratories, very much against the idea of changing it. We were able to change it and talk about other alternatives, such as burying waste on-site; things that they were doing in other countries like Canada, which was much more protective of the public; not putting it in what was going to be an unlined landfill, essentially, where radioactive waste could actually seep into the water twenty miles away from the Colorado River.

Diamond

So that's not happened. We were able to prevail. We were also very concerned about the issue of liability, and the way that the controller's office, through my work with the controller, Gray Davis, was to talk about what kind of liability would the citizens of the state of California have. If waste coming from other states spilled from trucks or trains in California, what kind of costs would we incur? So there was a relationship not only to the State Lands Commission, which we were a part of, but also just to the very nature of the state controller, which is to protect the citizens' fiscal strength in California.

Diamond

So that was an issue that I worked on as a result of having first been in No Oil and then moving to the controller's office. Then after I left the controller's office, the controller became the governor of the state of California, and he asked me a few months after he was elected governor and took office, if I would be his appointment to the Regional Water Quality Board. So that's kind of how that all happened. I got involved in one local issue, and through my

association with Gray Davis, ultimately ended up being appointed by him when he was governor, to the Water Quality Board, which I chair, and I've been chair of it four times.

Diamond

We regulate water quality for all of L.A. County and Ventura County, so that's about 12 [million] to 14 million people, all the watersheds in L.A. County and Ventura County, all the groundwater and the surface water. And that's basically where I've been for the last eight years.

Collings

Yes. Now, you said that you had come to the realization along the way that in any kind of activist struggle you have to like motivate people in a very personal way. I think that in the case of the No Oil, Inc., you tapped into people's sense of losing this beautiful space that everybody enjoyed. Did any of that kind of thinking inform you at all with the nuclear waste struggle? I mean, were you able to tap into any of those kinds of personal motivations with people who were against the site? I mean, you mentioned the insurance liability, but I can't imagine that being--

Diamond

Yes. That wasn't a personal--yes, in terms of the public health. Now, of course, we're talking about the entire state of California, so it wasn't personal in terms of a vote that came before the voters. But it was personal in that there were a lot of hearings, and there were reporters covering the hearings. I remember testifying before a congressman, George Miller, who was holding a committee meeting. I do think that the news of it and the reporting of it, it was very important to have people hear this information, and we were able to educate the public through the news media.

Diamond

There were a number of other environmental organizations. Of course, I was working for the state then, so I wasn’t an advocate. But other environmental organizations were able to call all the elected officials. There were many environmental organizations, one of which I'm on the board of and have been on the board for about fifteen years, which is the California League of Conservation Voters. It was very opposed to this, and, of course, they have memberships of thousands of people, and so do other environmental organizations, people concerned about the water quality of the Colorado River. So the environmental advocates were able to get the message across to the elected officials, which I really think is how the system is supposed to work.

Diamond

The elected officials should be listening to people who vote, and certainly, if they belong to environmental organizations, chances are they are voters, because they're giving money to environmental organizations, and so obviously

they care a lot about public policy, and who you elect informs what that public policy will be. I think the issue of public health was one that I tried to raise, and I think is important for environmental groups to always raise. I think whether it's a matter of water, do we care about what goes into our water and what kind of contaminants are in the water and what levels of contaminants are in the water. We do, and why do we, and how do we get people to care about it, is to tell them, "When you turn on the tap, do you want to be sure that your water is safe?"

Diamond

Of course, the state and federal health standards prevail, and so the drinking water is safe. But the only way to make sure that's the case is to keep the contaminants limited. There's never going to be zero contamination in groundwater, because we're human beings, and pollutants are part of our life, whether it's from the aerospace industry, legacy pollutants that came a long time ago, or from pharmaceuticals that we use today, that we as human beings excrete into the water. But as long as we make sure that we always connect the dots between public health and the environment, that, I believe is how environmental quality, whether it's air or water or soil, is going to be protected. People get the connection between their health and contamination. They want to protect their health and the health of their children.

Collings

Right. You said that you met Gray Davis when you were working with No Oil, Inc. How did that come about, in particular?

Diamond

Well, I had met him, actually, years earlier, just because I was very actively involved in Democratic politics, and, obviously, so was he. But I'd never worked with him. But he was an assembly member at the time, and he had raised a lot of money, as you have to in order to run for office, and he contributed, I believe it was, $900,000 of money he had raised to the cause of stopping oil drilling, as did other electeds as well, contributed much money from money they had raised. He thought that it was the wrong thing to do, and he believed also that if he was going to be an effective legislator and run for other office, that he needed to protect the environment that that was the right thing to do, and that's what the people, the voters, wanted him to do.

Diamond

So that's how I met him. He was involved by giving the money that he did, which was $900,000, which was a considerable amount, especially if you think about the time, 1988. It's what, twenty years ago? Yes, more. He was then able to be in some of our television commercials that we made. We had them mostly on cable television, but a lot of the money that you have to do to run an effective political--you have to spend a lot of money on television commercials.

So he was able to appear in some of them, because he was so generous. That was probably one of the things. "Well, I'll give all this money, but I'd like a little bit of the commercials." Most of our commercials, however, were made by Jim Garner, Ted Danson, and Walter Matthau, because celebrities like them who are very well liked and well regarded make people notice.

Collings

Yes. But these were not commercials for the Proposition O vote.

Diamond

Yes, they were.

Collings

Oh, they were. Okay. So who would actually produce the commercials? Would they have their own crew?

Diamond

No, we had a political consultant that we had to hire, of course, to do an effective political campaign. Took care of the mail that was sent out, the campaign brochures, and the radio and television ads. So we did have about $3 million for a citywide race, so we were able to spend money. It wasn't the $12 million that our opponents had, but it was enough to get us up on the air, and that's where we used our celebrities. They were all, you know, celebrities that people liked. I mean, they were well known, people who had been celebrities for years.

Collings

Kind of iconic.

Diamond

Very iconic, yes. Very iconic.

Collings

Do you have a sense that it was those celebrity spots that might have pulled you over the top in terms of the vote?

Diamond

You know, it's hard to know. I don't know. It certainly helped. It certainly helped. I think it probably did make a big difference.

Collings

And the opposing side did not have any personalities?

Diamond

They had no celebrities, no. They had no celebrities, not at all. I mean, the average person and the average celebrity believed the same thing, that it made no sense to drill for oil across from the most populated beach, most popular beach, in the coastal area of Santa Monica Bay.

Collings

Right. Yes. You were blessed with an easy message, in a way.

Diamond

The message was easy; no oil drilling along the coast.

Collings

Yes, but there was a lot of sort of flip-flopping with the city council over this issue along the way.

Diamond

With the elected officials. Now, there were people who represented the different areas of Los Angeles who, for some reason, believed that the people who lived in the inner city wouldn't care about the beach, which is ridiculous.

Collings

What about revenues that were being promised as a result of this?

Diamond

Well, we don't know. We can only surmise. We wondered, "What is it that they are being promised by Occidental Oil and Armand Hammer?" Surely something, because it made no sense. It was not a benefit. I suppose the benefit would be there would be revenues raised by a drilling of oil; that the City of Los Angeles would get a lot of money. I'm sure that the city would get a lot of money from Armand Hammer for that. But to sell your coastline was really just unthinkable.

Collings

Yes. But so originally--I have sort of an article here--originally the majority of the city council was for the drilling, and at a certain point you were able to sort of achieve a majority who were against it.

Diamond

Yes. It went back and forth. There were certain people--and I mean, I have no records. I'm sure that some of the other people in No Oil believe that some of the city council members who supported it--there were people like somebody whose last name was *[NAME?] Snyder. I mean, it was so many years ago. [Richard] Alatorre.

Collings

Alatorre, yes.

Diamond

That they probably were getting campaign contributions. I mean, of course, Armand Hammer would give campaign contributions. It was perfectly legal and within his rights to lobby and to influence. Then I guess the closer you got to the coast, you started to worry about, "Well, what about my voters? Will they like that?" Marvin Braude, who, he opposed it because he really, honestly--our city council member--honestly believed it was a terrible thing to do. He was a lifelong environmentalist, and he was responsible for the bike path. Most often, when something happens in a particular city council seat, the way the City of Los Angeles works, if you really care about it in your district, the other

members will usually go along with you, because when something comes up that's in their district, they'll want you to support it, too.

Diamond

There was a lot of opposition. There had to be a lot of I don't want to say payoffs, because I don't think contributions are payoffs, but a lot of contributions made to people from Armand Hammer, who was one of the wealthiest human beings in the United States. He wanted this. It was a great thing for Occidental. But we had some people on our side, but it was really Marvin Braude battling a lot of people. At some point, of course, we lost, and that's why we ended up going to the initiative.

Collings

Right. Yes, because finally you didn't have the votes on the city council.

Diamond

Right.

Collings

Did you have any sense of what any of those sort of back-door deals were on the city council?

Diamond

No. Nobody would--you know. And that was, of course, before the time of having the public--I mean, not public but good government finance, campaign finance laws, where you have to disclose who your contributors were. This was the late sixties, early seventies. You could get campaign contributions, and nobody would ever know who they were from. And legally, that was the case; you didn't have to report them.

Collings

Yes. So that would sort of be impossible to trace at that point. Okay. So you mentioned that you had been involved in a lot of Democratic Party work, before No Oil, even.

Diamond

Well, I had been involved in some. One of my dear friends ran for state senate in 1970, and she lost by something like less than 1 percent. She would have been the first woman elected to the state senate in California. My husband ran for state assembly, and he lost by 5 percent against an entrenched incumbent, and so I was involved in that campaign. And just over the years I was involved in local state legislative campaigns. That's just been something that I've been interested in, and I told you I did a little work for Robert Kennedy. That was my first.

Diamond

I've worked as a member of the California League of Conservation Voters, very involved, because we're a political and environmental organization, and that's why I like this organization. It's actually the only environmental group that I'm

on the board of, because it combines environmentalism with politics, whereas most environmental groups, and I belong to many of them as a member, in order to maintain your tax-exempt status, you don't get involved. You don't endorse. But California League of Conservation Voters gets their hands and feet very dirty in politics; "dirty" in that I mean we actually get involved, and we do the grunt work, and we're involved in campaigns. The money that you contribute is not tax-deductible.

Diamond

I've also been very involved in the Women's Political Committee, because I'm not only interested in electing good environmentalists, I would like as many of them to be women as possible, because I believe it's not equitable in terms of the number of women elected to office in California. We have maybe ten or twelve now. We're losing women. Some of the women who were termed out are not being replaced by women. So I am very much a feminist and very interested in supporting good women candidates, and have.

Diamond

One of the women I've been most involved in supporting is Fran Pavley, who is one of the foremost environmental electeds, I think, ever in the state of California. She was termed out after six years in the state assembly. She was instrumental in creating the first legislation to deal with global climate change, not only in the state of California, but I believe in the entire country. she is right now running for election to the state senate, and I'm very involved in her campaign, as well.

Collings

You also have done--you showed me some pictures which suggested you had done some campaign work for the Clintons, as well.

Diamond

I did. In fact, in 1991 some very close friends of Bill [William J.] Clinton, who happened to be friends of mine, asked me if I would put together a group of people to meet Bill Clinton. It was October of '91, and he had just announced--he was the governor of Arkansas--that he was going to be a candidate for the presidency. Would I put together some people who were environmental leaders in California to meet him?

Diamond

So I said, "Sure." So I called people. It was really hard to get people out. It was just a few days' notice. We had about twenty people right here, and both Hillary and Bill Clinton came; spent about two hours talking with us, and just, you know, gave a little formal presentation, but spent a lot of time just mingling and talking to the people there.

Diamond

We were quite taken with him, but, honestly, more taken with Hillary. In fact, my daughter said--at the time she was in college; she had just graduated from college, and she was applying to law school. She said to her friends that, "Yeah, Bill Clinton was really great, but his wife, wow." I think that many people felt that, and I'm very much a part of her campaign now, in terms of trying to help her as much as I can, making telephone calls, contributing money, very nervously biting my nails during every debate, including last night [laughter], and hoping that somehow or other she can pull it off and be the nominee.

Collings

Just sort of backtracking a little bit, you mentioned your interest in the California League of Conservation Voters was that it combined environmentalism and politics. What led you to the topic of your thesis? Or if you want to wrap up, maybe you could just mention that, and we could continue later.

Diamond

My interest in my thesis, which was actually written the first year that I worked for Gray Davis as an intern specializing in environmental issues, was I had been involved in both politics and the environment--in 1989 or '90 this was, I guess--since 1967, '68, and I realized how much the political system impacted the environmental movement, and vice versa. So that's kind of what I wanted to write about, because environmentalism really, I think, was born popularly in 1972 with the advent of the oil spill, the terrible oil spill in Santa Barbara. But really it was started, I think, by Rachel Carson earlier, who is one of my heroes, a woman and an environmentalist, when she worked very hard to ban DDT as a pesticide because of the public health impacts. I think that really gave birth to the environmental movement.

Diamond

So when I was looking at environmental organizations and thinking about where I might want to be involved, the natural fit for me, really, at that time in my life, has been the California League of Conservation Voters, because of the fact that they concentrate on electing good environmentalists and getting rid of bad environmentalists. So it kind of takes those two interests and puts them together in one organization, and so I've been very happy working to raise money for them and to help guide it as a board member.

Diamond

I did my thesis on that, because I noticed that the environmental movement was mostly informed not by books, long, well-written books that take years to write, but really by periodicals that come out from environmental organizations on a monthly basis. I read and learn more about what's going on in environment from reading the Heal the Bay newsletter and the California League of

Conservation and the Coalition for Clean Air. That's really kind of the literature of the environmental movement, rather than the long academic treatises, which are important, but environmentalism takes place on both a short-term and a long-term basis. As I said, you can't take your eyes off of something. If you wait for a year for a book to come out, it's already happened. It's too late. So you've got to depend on almost immediate crisis intervention in the environment.

Collings

So you're sort of seeing the intersection of environment and policy as being that policy must be very elastic and be responding to these sort of very immediate needs.

Diamond

Yes. Both immediate and long-range. You have to take a long-range view, of course. What I've learned to do, and maybe this would be a good place to start next time, is as a member of a state water agency, as opposed to being a community activist or advocate from an environmental perspective. It takes a lot longer to get things done as a regulator, which is what I've become. From an environmental advocate, I've become a regulator. You have to be patient, because it does take a long time to effect long-term change. States are like giant ships. You can't turn around in an instant. You really need to understand that it's going to take years to effect some change. But the environmental advocates are very much a part of the process and help to inform the regulators about what the impacts of their actions are.

Collings

Well, in a way your career embodies the way that the environmental movement itself has changed, which is from sort of the early days of an activist tradition, into a more professionalized area. It seems that you have sort of followed along with each of those steps in your own life.

Diamond

Yes, without planning to do that. It just kind of--

Collings

Without planning. Yes, it just happened that way. Yes.

Diamond

--happened. I know. One of my favorite books, if I can remember, was written by the daughter of Margaret Mead, [Mary Catherine] Bateson. I've got her book. But it's called Composing a Life. I read it twenty years ago, and I keep it up there in my bookshelves, because I always think about that book, is that how women--and I think she is also a anthropologist--women have a different way of getting to someplace. It's not a straight arrow; it's very circular, and it has to do with multitasking. She talked about that then, although I'm sure she didn't use the word multitasking. But that you might be--and I pictured myself when

she talked about it--you might be feeding your kids, and you have one hand with the spoon with the kid in the high chair, and the other hand has the phone, and you're talking to somebody about some political action that you're planning or some project that has to do with some public policy that you're involved with.

Diamond

So there's not a real plan, but it just kind of happened. At the time you think, "I'm never going to be through with diapers and formula," but somehow or other, the time really passes. I think it goes way faster than you expect it to. In fact, now I have to go pick up my grandson. [Laughs]

Collings

Exactly. I was thinking that's a perfect example of what you were saying.

### 1.3. Session 3,May 2, 2008

Collings

Okay. Good morning. Jane Collings, interviewing Fran Diamond on May 2nd in her home.

Collings

As we were just saying, we were going to talk a little bit today about the interface between community groups and political forces. You had done some thinking about that when you did your master's thesis. I thought I would just like ask you a question that you ask in the introduction to this written work. You said, "Can environmental policy be driven by the good work of committed activists? Will the political process compromise the environmental goals so as to render them ineffective?"

Diamond

Yes. You know, it's been some years since I wrote that, and when I wrote it, it was before my experience inside government working as a regulator. So I have probably a better perspective on that now than I did at the time, when I was a student, graduate student, and visualized myself as an environmental advocate. Well, I still believe that I am an environmental advocate, and I do so now in the role as a regulator, as a member of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, which is--I probably should basically define it.

Diamond

It is a part of the California Environmental Protection Agency. The State of California, I think since the early seventies, possibly earlier, has had a structure of regional water quality boards. What the regional water quality boards do is enforce the Federal Clean Water Act and the state Porter-Cologne water quality legislation. So the state is divided up into nine regional boards, and the regional

board members are appointed by the governor, all of them. Each regional board has nine, up to nine, members. We have seven.

Diamond

Our mission is to preserve and protect all of the watersheds in our region, and it's a very large region. It's the largest, most populous region of the state, of all the water boards. We include all of L.A. County and Ventura County. All the cities within those counties, and those two counties, are regulated by us in terms of the water quality. So we are responsible for the water quality of all the watersheds. That includes the Santa Monica Bay, the Los Angeles River, the Santa Clara River, the San Gabriel Watershed, the Dominguez Watershed. All the tributaries, creeks, and water, both surface and groundwater, within this large region of about 12 [million] to 13 million people.

Diamond

So it's a very big responsibility, and what the regional boards do is we set the water quality standards. We do that in our legislative role, which is to, every three years, look at our basin, the basin of the watersheds, which are like catchments. They would call them catchments in Europe, but we call them watersheds. Basically, we set the water quality standards and then issue permits and regulations to uphold those standards for all the watersheds in our region. That means that we issue storm water permits, and we issue permits to cities and permits to wastewater treatment plants, all of the entities that would discharge water into the storm water system in our region rather than into the sewers. There's a lot of water discharge into the storm water system in this region, because if we didn't have a storm water system that was separate, we would have a lot of cities that exist today that wouldn't exist because they'd be flooded.

Diamond

So that's a long way of telling you what regional water quality boards do. Our board is the most urbanized, the most populous, the least open space of all the regions in the state of California. So I was appointed in 1999 by the former governor, Gray Davis. At the time I was appointed, I was the first appointment of his on this water board. The other appointments on the board were all appointments of Governor [Pete] Wilson.

Diamond

Except for one person on the board, it was a very business-friendly board, which really didn't ask the question, "What can we do to improve water quality?" But the big question that they looked at was, "How much is it going to cost the various cities to pay for this?" Never asking the big question of, "How much does it cost the people of the state of California in our region to not have this? How much does it cost in terms of the economy, beach closures, tourism, loss of tourism, and health costs for people who get sick by swimming

in a bacteria-laden Santa Monica Bay or trash-filled L.A. rivers that pour out onto the beaches of Long Beach?"

Diamond

So once I was appointed, and then the governor appointed other people who also brought the perspective of really what was the mission of this regional board, which was to protect and improve water quality, while considering what the economic costs are. The mission was to improve water quality. So I was able to bring a perspective of an environmentalist to it, because I was appointed as a public member. There are various categories, and one of them was representing--not representing, but bringing the perspective of a public member to this board.

Diamond

So over the years since I was appointed in '99 and then reappointed by Governor Davis in 2001, when my term was up, I've seen a change in the regional board. I was recently appointed again by Governor [Arnold] Schwarzenegger last year. All of these terms, by the way, all of the members have to be appointed by the governor and then confirmed by the state senate.

Diamond

So, again, getting back to the question and not diverting too much, as a regulator I've seen that the environmental community, which comes before us all the time, as well as cities and other stakeholders from the business community, from the perspective of the county or the cities or the dischargers, which I've learned to call them as a regulator, as opposed to "the polluters," which I probably would have called them before as an environmentalist, that--

Collings

That's interesting.

Diamond

So in that sense I've taken on the hat of the regulator, and the language may be different from time to time. But the mission allows us to set the standards and to enforce the standards. But I see that the environmental community has a very strong voice, and not a more important voice, but a strong voice before the regional board, and that they have to have their message strong, because the message of the cities, some of the cities are much more environmental in their perspective, in their outlook, and their action than others. So it's very important for the environmentalists to have a strong voice, and the regulators listen to them very closely.

Diamond

When we have our meetings, Heal the Bay and Baykeeper and the National Resources Defense Council are frequently before us. We listen to them. We listen to everybody. It's very important for--[telephone rings]. I'm very sorry.

Collings

That's okay.

Diamond

I'll turn it off so it doesn't happen again.

Collings

That's all right. Do you need to answer that?

Diamond

No.[Tape recorder turned off.]

Collings

Okay.

Diamond

So I feel that I bring my background as an environmentalist with me to the table as a regulator, and I know that not everybody who sits on my board has the same environmental background or advocacy background that I have. In fact, some have very different backgrounds, and that's as it should be. We have people whose life has been in the agricultural community and in the business community and in the legal community. Some of them have had some science background, which is very good, too, because it's based on science, and we have to read a lot of science to bring the science and the law into our decision making in enforcing the Clean Water Act and the state water laws.

Diamond

So I never see myself as a regulator or a former environmentalist. I hope that I always have the frame of reference of an environmental advocate, because I think that's why I was appointed in the first place. It's important for there to be people on these boards who look at public health and the environment and feel that our position is there to help protect the public and protect aquatic life. So I'm sure there are people--I know there are people--who come to our meetings who are stakeholders; cities who feel that our water quality permits are too stringent, or that they can't afford to do what they think they have to do to meet the standards; probably think that I'm an environmental advocate, and they would be probably critical of me for that. I'm sure they would be.

Diamond

But I'm fine with that. I've been the chair of this board four times, not consecutive, but different times over the years that I've been on it, which has been eight years. I feel that the board has really come to a place where we are looked at as the strongest environmental regional board in this state, if not the nation. We frequently get letters from others and received awards from other agencies, and even the National Resources Defense Council, for our work. So I'm very pleased that our regulating agency is now viewed by people who care about protecting the environment as an agency that really listens and has done a lot for an agency, for a regulating body, to ensure our mission and to be reminded always of what our mission is.

Diamond

It's very difficult, because there are people on the board who would basically like to be less forward-thinking. But my goal has been, as a board member and I think as the chair, to be able to move our board forward in environmental protection of the water, the watersheds of our region, in a way that takes into consideration both--what I think is necessary--the science and the law, and the law, and to push the envelope as far as we can with scientific validity and within the law, and I think that we've done that.

Diamond

So I think that environmentalists are extremely important, that they do move the political situation, and that without environmental support we would not be able to go as far as we can, under the law and with good science, because there would be too much pressure from others to make decisions that were bad. I can see that when there were decisions that were not influenced by sound environmental advocacy, that if we're lobbied--I shouldn't say lobbied, but have testimony from stakeholders who don't have the environmental best interests at heart, but perhaps more the bottom line, their city's economic interests, budgetary interests foremost, and don't put a priority on public health as it pertains to the environment, that it would be hard to make these decisions. So I do see that as [unclear].

Collings

Can you think of any instances since you've been on the board where it was specifically the pressure of the public which brought the board to a certain decision?

Diamond

It's really helpful to have the public come before the board, and sometimes in great numbers. It's very effective. I can think of a couple of times, but one time there was an issue of a landfill near Granada Hills. It was a landfill that the city and the county--Sunshine Canyon Landfill--had been using for a long time and wanted to expand it. Of course, we do live in a society in an urban area where we still have a lot of things that we dispose of. We throw away a lot of litter, a lot of trash that gets picked up. People put their trashcans out, and they know it's going to be picked up and taken somewhere else.

Diamond

The somewhere else that this was being taken to was in other people's neighborhoods, and they were concerned about the potential of health problems. In fact, they said that they believed that there was an extraordinary number of cancer and incidences of asthma and miscarriages, and they were very concerned that this dump--I shouldn't call it a dump, I guess--this landfill not be allowed to expand, because, in fact, they felt that they were all getting very sick.

Diamond

So they brought lots of people to this meeting, and our board took it very, very seriously. In fact, we asked that the county health department be brought in and that they do a survey of the neighbors and see whether there was, in fact, differences in terms of the health situation. Did the people living around this landfill have more incidences of cancer, more incidence of asthma and all the other health issues that they brought to us, and what could we do to protect them, and, in fact, was there anything that was not being done that could be done?

Diamond

So the county health department did come in. They did do a survey. They reported back to us that the incidences of the particular health issues--miscarriages, asthma, cancer, and any other things that were brought to our attention--was really not, in fact, greater than in other parts of the city and the county that were not around this landfill.

Diamond

We did require, through our regulations, and this was something that I particularly felt that I gave a lot of leadership to, that they line this dump. I mean, it was just outrageous to me that this landfill not be lined with a double liner that would keep it from--this regular trash, not radioactive, you know, just regular trash--from seeping into the groundwater. It's not a requirement. These particular kind of landfills are not, by regulation or by law--it's not necessary to do that. But I thought that it would be important to do that, because you just don't know. Sometimes things get thrown into landfills that shouldn't be thrown into landfills.

Collings

Sure. Batteries and all kinds of--

Diamond

So we did, and it was very expensive for the operator of the landfill to do this. They really fought it tooth and nail, but we prevailed. There were appeals, and they brought it to the state board, and the state board approved our regulation. The people really made a difference. When they came before us, they said, "You're the only agency that's ever listened to us. No one has ever listened to us." So I felt that that was good information for us, and it was a good way to show people that, in fact, you can have a government agency that really listens to you. The idea that that was unusual was just so shocking to me. Then again, why be shocked? I mean, I guess government agencies don't really listen to people.

Diamond

So I've really made it a policy for our regional board that everybody gets an opportunity to speak. Of course, there is a public session, and people come

before us. They get three minutes during the public forum, and if they want to speak during a particular issue, they get the same opportunity as anybody else does, whether it's a discharger or a city or an elected official who comes before us. They really need to be heard. We're working for the people of the state of California, and not for the businesses of the state of California, and I think that's been a change in our regional board. In fact, our regional board, I've been told by others around the state, is the only regional board in the state that really listens to people and has that kind of an outlook or perspective.

Collings

Now, how did the board react when the county health department reported that they did not find a higher incidence of illness? I mean, how were they able to digest that information and then go forward with the changes that you describe?

Diamond

The board, at the time that this happened, I would say three or four of the members really by that time had quite a strong environmental ethic. So I had a lot of colleagues then. I mean, the governor had appointed several people who really came from a perspective of understanding that what they wanted to do was always move toward improving water quality. So there was great leadership on our board, both from myself and from others, who believed that what we needed to do was be as protective as possible under the law, with an understanding of the science.

Diamond

So we were able to do that. It really was something we wanted to do and felt that it was important to do, and even though the county health department said that people didn't have a higher incidence, we could see that there were a lot of sick people there. While, in fact, the survey didn't show that, it didn't mean to us that we shouldn't be as protective as possible; that, in fact, these people lived near a very polluted landfill; that all of us sent our trash there, and we should do as much as we could and can to not only protect them, but protect the underlying groundwater from what might migrate into it.

Collings

Yes. So you feel that because there was a sort of a critical mass of people who, as you said, had strong environmental ethics, that you were able to move ahead.

Diamond

Yes.

Collings

Does the constitution of this board differ from the other boards? Because you said that this one is considered to be the most progressive in that respect.

Diamond

Well, of course, I don't attend regional board meetings of other regional boards. But I do hear that there are, from people in the state and from legislative people

and political people--it's pretty much acknowledged that our regional board is probably the most progressive. I say that because we've issued storm water permits, for example, that are talked about around the country, and we have other regulations that are far-reaching. We hear from scientists and from people who talk around the country and from speeches that are given, that we have really made a difference and that other people are looking at us.

Diamond

When we recently hired a new executive officer--who, by the way, was the executive officer of a significant environmental organization--I was sent an e-mail by somebody out of the state, saying, "Well, now the best regional board in the country"--I mean, "the state--has become the best regional board in the country. It's just incredible how far-reaching you are in acknowledging and realizing," I guess, "what your mission is."

Collings

How did the board get that way? I mean, was it the Gray Davis appointments, or what was it?

Diamond

I think that there were some extraordinary appointments. We had a couple of really good leaders, and in fact, one of the people who is no longer on the board but was a person on the board when I joined the board, who had been appointed originally by Pete Wilson, became a close friend of mine. He is an extraordinary person. His name is David Nahai, and he is actually now the general manager of the Department of Water and Power. He and I had a lot in common in terms of a vision of what our mission was and what this board could do.

Diamond

He was a very lonely voice on the board before I joined it, and so he was very happy to have someone else who had the same environmental ethic that he did and who really understood that the regional board was an environmental board; that you don't have a board whose mission it is to improve water quality, both groundwater and surface water, who should not consider itself an environmental board, which is really the history of this regional board and probably most regional boards in the state, was that we have to be very balanced; we have to balance business interests and environmental interests. And, really, what we need to do is to improve and restore and protect water quality.

Diamond

So when I joined him, and then there were a couple of other appointments, we understood that, and that was the critical mass. So that critical mass--and I have to say we had a staff who was really committed to their mission. But the staff under the system of regional boards, basically--they're scientists; they're

engineers; they're hydrologists. They're people who join state environmental agencies because that's their idea of what they want to do; they want to improve water quality. Many of them could leave and get much higher paying jobs working for cities, working for private industries, consulting companies, and make a lot more money, but for the fact that that's not what they want to do. They really want to improve water quality.

Diamond

But here they are. They can issue staff reports to a board of laypeople who are not scientists, who are not engineers, who make the decisions. So I would imagine that for years they were frustrated. In fact, I know that they were frustrated--I've talked to many of them--because they were driven by boards whose policies were not as environmental as their own ethics, environmental ethics, and the purpose for which they went into this career. So the staff then found that they had a board in about 1999, beginning to have a board who shared a common vision. I think with that critical mass, they were able to go on and do their job.

Diamond

Now we're at a different place. We no longer have David Nahai--he's left--to go on to doing very good, important work for the City of Los Angeles, that will be very much involved with global climate change and energy and water issues. Another couple of appointments, whose terms were up, were not renewed. Mine was, and I found that Governor Schwarzenegger has made some good appointments, but he balances his very good appointments with some that are possibly not as good. So now I don't have as critical a mass on this board, in terms of people who come with an environmental ethic.

Diamond

But I will say that some of the people who have come on our board have learned that the mission is different. In fact, one person who joined our board, who I was kind of concerned about, said he has realized that he's not an environmentalist, but he's a conservationist, and he has really taken on a much more water-protective ethic. I feel that I've been able to lead this board so far in this last two years of being chair, but I'm not sure how it will be in the future, because it's not as strong an environmental board in terms of the outlook. There are a couple of members on our board now--I would say two; I won't identify them--who truly do not see themselves as water quality protectors, I guess I would say, but as people who come with the perspective of the construction industry and cities, who feel perhaps that we're putting too much burden on the cities to do their part.

Diamond

So right now I still have, I think, the ability to lead this board. We just had a meeting yesterday, and I was able to lead them in four important decisions.

With the help of a really incredible staff, we had unanimous decisions. I was worried going in that it would be tough going, but it moved well. I got the decisions that I thought were the right decisions, and so, so far, so good. But it's not as easy, I can tell, as it was, say, two years ago.

Collings

And this is because of the new Schwarzenegger appointments?

Diamond

A couple.

Collings

Were those appointments made because this board was perceived as being too environmentally friendly, not business friendly?

Diamond

I'm not sure. I wasn't there when those decisions were made. I mean, I was reappointed, and he just made a very good appointment of someone who just joined us, who is also a strong environmental advocate. She had to leave the board of Heal the Bay in order to join our board, because it would be a conflict. But Governor Schwarzenegger's appointments, he's made some very good appointments, but I find them to be balanced in a way that perhaps doesn't--he probably feels that if he makes a really strong environmental appointment, then he needs to make a strong appointment of someone who would balance that appointment. So it's tougher.

Collings

In terms of other interest groups; in terms of the needs of other interest groups.

Diamond

Yes.

Collings

So what are the major challenges going forward, do you think, for this board?

Diamond

The major challenges going forward are to be able to pass strong and effective storm water permits in the next two years, because storm water is the most significant water pollution issue that we have in our region. These storm water permits will be in effect for five years, and there will be a lot of pressure against making them stronger. Every five years the storm water permits have been stronger and stronger. There will be pressure and it will be harder to do, but I have a lot of confidence that we have really good staff, and our executive officer, which I'm very proud of having hired, is strategic and politically savvy, and comes from an environmental advocacy background. So I have a lot of confidence that, with her leadership and with my leadership and a couple of other strong members on the board, we'll be able to make it through.

Diamond

You know, this is the way it is. If we have political leadership that sees the value of water quality, I think that we're on a road that we won't really turn back. You know, I really do have confidence that we've come this far for a good reason, and that is the political--we're getting back to that question--the political reason. Voters have shown time and time and time again in the state of California, and I've seen this now since we talked about No Oil in 1988, that they care about water quality. Every single initiative that's been passed that's been on the ballot over the last eight years, have passed overwhelmingly. In 19--no, I'm sorry--2004, there was an initiative on the ballot in the city of Los Angeles, which was just like in 1988; the No Oil thing was just for the city of Los Angeles. In 2004 the City of L.A. put on the ballot something that was called, again, Proposition O, which was ironic, because Proposition O was the same ballot designation for the No Oil thing.

Diamond

What it said was, "Are you willing to tax yourself, the citizens or the voters of the city of Los Angeles, a half a billion dollars in order to have water quality improvements?" This was put on the ballot--it sort of brings it full circle--because of our regional board's requirements, regulations, that the City of Los Angeles really had to do a tremendous amount to clean up the storm water, to clean up all kinds of problems with storm water pollution, and they didn't have the money to do it, to meet the requirements of many regulations that we had besides storm water permits. They put this on the ballot. It was to meet the requirements of our regional board.

Collings

This was with regard to cleaning up water before it's discharged into the ocean?

Diamond

Cleaning up water, cleaning up--yes, before it's discharged, and just all kinds of projects that would improve water quality in the city of Los Angeles, based on requirements of our regional board, our regulations. The citizens of the city of Los Angeles passed this by 76 percent. That's huge. Seventy-six percent of the voters in the city of Los Angeles in 2004 said, "We want to tax ourselves a half a billion dollars for water quality improvements."

Diamond

I was then asked by the city council, the president of the City Council of Los Angeles, to sit on an advisory commission. That was required in this initiative. It said that you will have an advisory commission, the Citizens Oversight Advisory Commission, for Proposition O, to approve projects that would indeed do what you're required to do by the water quality board and by the voters who passed this. So I've been sitting on this board, this advisory board, since 2004, and we've been approving projects that would, in fact, do this.

We've basically budgeted the half a billion dollars over the course of the last few years, to pay for projects that will be going on in the city of Los Angeles.

Diamond

Just yesterday one of these projects was dealt with at our water board, which is a project near San Pedro, which is cleaning up Machado Lake, which is the source of huge pollution in the city of Los Angeles. So it's sort of been full circle, you know, the Proposition O in 1988, and then being on the water board, and now having another Proposition O, which is paying for some of the regulations that my water quality board has issued since I've been on the board.

Diamond

So I do see the political efforts, and I'm not so sure it's the political efforts, but certainly political in the fact that the governor appoints the members of the regional water board, and the environmental community comes before us, as well as the city leaders in the region for the ninety-five cities that we regulate. So it is a very fine balance between enforcing water quality regulations, but also writing the regulations that we enforce. So I would say that the question that I asked was, "Does the environmental movement and the political people, political policy, influence each other?"

Diamond

It is a fine dance. They do influence each other, and one cannot exist without the other. You could not have strong environmental regulation without political people, political electeds, making the judgments about who will sit on these agencies, nor could you have strong policy and regulations issued without the influence and pressure of the environmental community. So I think it's a hand-in-hand thing. One can't do it without the other.

Collings

In terms of that relationship, I mean, how have you seen that change over the years? I mean, there must have been some, you know, shift in how that dynamic works.

Diamond

Well, I think the environmental organizations have become much stronger, much more effective, and have felt the results of their power. I think it's been a matter of education. I think most people, just like the board member who is a conservative Republican appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger, who comes from a long line of farmers and is very much a part of the agricultural community in Ventura, who realizes the big picture now. He never thought of himself as an environmentalist, and he doesn't like the word. But he says, "I'm a conservationist."

Collings

Yes, I wanted to ask you about that.

Diamond

I think that we've all undergone a tremendous education. I became involved in the environmental movement in the late sixties because of something happening in my own community, which was the oil drilling threat. But I think everybody--you can't live in California, particularly Southern California, when we have issues of air quality problems and water quality problems, without feeling the effect of the environmentalists and the education of the environmentalists. If you take a walk along the beach or even in your own neighborhood, and you look at the storm water, you see that there are dolphins or fish painted on it, and it says, "This leads to the ocean." I think that the education that goes on in school as a result of many environmental organizations--I think Heal the Bay is responsible for some legislation that requires children to have environmentalism as part of their curriculum in the public schools in the state of California.

Diamond

So there has been a tremendous growth in environmental education, thanks to the environmental movement, which started out probably, you know, in the seventies and earlier. But it wasn't until Earth Day and really people didn't really read too much about Rachel Carson and what she did to ban DDT and pesticides. But it's all a matter of things filtering up, and I do think environmental education has become a part of everybody, even if they don't think of themselves as an environmentalist. People now know that if they throw something into the street, it's going to get into the storm drains, and that's going to lead out to the ocean.

Diamond

I think it starts with children, with education. We see that the counties and the state put out public service messages that you see on television about not littering, about making sure that you know not to litter, and that if you do, that it ends up in the ocean. So everybody, I think--I think we've elected people who understand that they want environmental support. We have leaders around the state who are elected because they live in communities that have strong environmental ethics; have people who think of the environment as part of why they vote for a particular person. We have organizations like the League of Conservation Voters, who register voters, and part of what they do is make sure that voters know that the environment is something that they need to consider.

Diamond

So I think the environmental movement has grown, and because of that, it affects the political process, and that's a good thing. I think politicians know that one of the messages that they have to give is that they're good on the environment, and why, if they want to get elected in certain parts of the state; maybe not in all parts of the state. But it's grown a lot, and I do see the impact of the environmental movement on the political process. I see that people like,

in my own community, in my senate seat, like Fran Pavley, who is running for election to the state senate, who was an assembly member. One of the reasons she is so popular and will probably be elected is she has been a statewide and even national leader on environmental issues, and people know that.

Diamond

That wasn't the case in the early seventies. Nobody really voted on whether somebody was good on the environment. That was kind of like a way-out-there, kind of fringy, hippy kind of thing, and it's much more mainstream now. Now it's a part of the mainstream issues that you think about, whether it's the economy, whether it's the budget, whether it's the--you know that the environment is something that you consider. Education, the environment, healthcare issues, what it costs to send your children to school, all of those issues are now linked.

Diamond

I think the big issue or the big link was that people began to understand, and I think the environmentalists made this connection finally, that public health and the environment were connected; that if you only talked about the spotted owl or saving some species that people didn't even know existed, while it was important, people didn't get the reason why it was important, and it certainly wasn't important enough that they wanted to spend their dollars on that, as opposed to public schools or other issues that seemed much more important to them.

Diamond

Once environmentalists started to say, "Well, but if your water is polluted, your kids can get sick, or if the air you breathe is polluted, you can have significant asthma or other health issues," once people got that there was a real connection between the environment and public health, you could then say, "And species, if we lose our species, that shows that there is something going on that is connected to public health." Once that connection was made, which I think was key, people got it, and that was, I think, why environmentalists maybe weren't so successful early on. They didn't make that connection for people, which was key, and it's truthful.

Diamond

It seemed a very elitist kind of thing. Well, if you were an environmentalist, it meant that you just had too much time on your hands. You didn't really have to deal with real economic issues that other people had to deal with. But, in fact, once you talked about toxic soil and water that could make you sick and air that could make you sick, then people realized that, "Yeah, this really does affect me, and I need to be an environmentalist if I want to protect my family."

Diamond

In fact, I see this all the time. Just about three weeks ago, as the chair of the water board, I went out to Compton, because we recently discovered that there was public housing projects in our region where the water and the soil was highly contaminated because forty years ago they built these public housing projects on the site of former tank farms. Former tank farms basically stored above-ground tanks filled with petroleum products. Before building these housing projects, they weren't required to clean up the ground. Perhaps it could have been argued, well, forty or fifty years ago they didn't realize that the residue from these tank farms, owned by ExxonMobil and other oil companies, would leach into the groundwater.

Diamond

So they built public housing, and they didn't have to do any testing of this until it was for sale, which it was for sale a couple of years ago. This was county property, and it was being sold. I don't know who was considering buying it, but they had to do investigations to make sure that it was something they, in fact wanted to purchase, and found out that the groundwater and the soil was highly contaminated.

Diamond

Once that happened, our regional board was brought in as a lead agency to investigate and to clean it up. So I went to a community meeting there of these people who had been living there, many of them since it was first built. On this site there were also three daycare centers.

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Diamond

We found that people are living in just horrible conditions, where the groundwater--they turn their showers on, and they were saying that they could smell gasoline.

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Diamond

Their eyes burned from the water. It's quite disturbing, and so our regional board got involved with HUD, and we're having to relocate the people who lived there, so that we could clean it up and make it hopefully healthful for them to live there. It's very sad that this happened. Today you'd never build something there, but it was built there, and very unhealthy conditions arose. Political leaders really didn't question it. Environmentalists didn't. In the forties or the sixties, I guess, when these were built, there was nobody. There were no advocates there questioning the wisdom and trying to protect people.

Diamond

So you can see where this would never happen today. First of all, I'm sure it wouldn't be allowed. You'd have to clean it up and prove that it was safe to site housing there.

Collings

Well, the environmental justice movement of the nineties, particularly in lower income areas, communities of color, where you would find a lot of industrial activity going on, and, as you know, this was a movement where people were pointing out the health effects of this.

Diamond

Right.

Collings

Do you think that it was this environmental justice movement that sort of completed the circle and brought up that awareness of the linkage between the environment and public health, which you point to as being like such a crucial--

Diamond

Yes, I think that they're a key part of it. You know, I think the environmental justice movement is really now really coming to fruition. There are many environmental justice organizations. But I think that environmental justice organizations need to be part of the mainstream environmental movement. In fact, most environmental organizations have a strong component of environmental justice. I don't really think it's necessary for them to be separate. They may be separate; I do see that leaders in the environmental justice arena are now even becoming regulators. I know somebody who was recently appointed, a strong environmental justice person, to the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Collings

Who is that?

Diamond

His name is Joe Lyou. So I think that environmental justice and the environmental movement have become and need to come together. They need to work together. I don't think it works, or maybe it's no longer necessary, to be separate, because I think there's an understanding--there has to be an understanding--that environmental justice is a major component of environmentalism, and regulators have to be a part--and I know our regional board considers environmental justice as a very important part of what we do and who we protect. I certainly bring that to the table when I'm there, and yet I don't believe I've ever been a part of an organization that was specifically environmental justice. But I do think environmental justice has to be a part of the ethic of all environmentalists and of all electeds.

Diamond

Environmental justice just means that we need to recognize that the people who are most vulnerable to environmental injustice are the poorest among us, and usually they're women and children, because mostly single women raising their children are the poorest; that polluters have been able to site their polluting industries in the poorest communities where people live, and so therefore they're the most vulnerable to environmental pollution. They certainly live closest to refineries and places that pollute, I mean, just because it's less expensive to live there.

Diamond

But I do think that environmental justice has to be a high priority for all environmentalists, whether they're electeds or regulators or advocates, that that's key; that they need to be together, and I guess environmental justice organizations, they need to exist, because they have pressured the environmental community to recognize that that should be a very serious part of everything they consider. So maybe they've been so effective that I believe that environmental justice is a strong part of all environmental organizations, whether they call themselves environmental justice organizations or not.

Collings

So at what point do you think that environmentalism and the question of public health became linked? I mean, if you were sort of thinking about the terrain that you've participated in.

Diamond

I would say within the last twenty years. I look at some environmental organizations--the ones that most people nationally have heard about are organizations like the Sierra Club, and I think the Sierra Club really was an organization that was thought of by the average person as maybe being, oh, only interested in protecting places that we can't go to, and birds that we don't see, and trails that we don't hike on. Rightly or wrongly, that was a perception that people had.

Diamond

Then you started having other organizations develop that possibly captured the understanding of others that they were looking to protect them; I would say organizations like Heal the Bay, which is a California organization. But there are Riverkeepers and Baykeepers all over the nation, who actually said--and Dorothy Green, who I know you know, started Heal the Bay. The idea was we have oceans that need to be protected, but until you can connect that to the average person, meaning all of us, that protecting the ocean means that we're taking care of ourselves, because if our ocean is sick, we get sick.

Diamond

We all love the ocean. No matter where you live in Southern California, most people can have access one way or the other to the bay. The Santa Monica Bay

attracts people from all over our city, and it's a rather inexpensive way to enjoy the day. I mean, if you can get a busload or a carload of people to the bus for [$]6 or $7 to park, you can enjoy the most beautiful place in the world.

Diamond

So the idea was to name something, the name of the organization, that could relate to the average person. Heal the Bay; that means it must be sick, you know. So that was, I think, a very brilliant strategy, when that was founded, to name this organization something that described that there was a problem; that if the Santa Monica Bay is sick, then we're all affected by it.

Diamond

So I do think the other organizations, such as Heal the Bay and the Riverkeepers and the Natural Resources Defense Council, which is a legal organization to help people with environmental problems, whether it was air problems or water problems or toxic problems, that would protect people, protect all of us. So I would say that perhaps in the eighties there was a beginning of an understanding that we need to really fix the problems, and there are health problems. It's not just a PR problem, but there are real health problems, and we don't have the support of people because people don't understand that there are health problems, because we're not educating them.

Diamond

So it was a matter of educating, understanding that the environmental problems had to be embraced by everybody in order to have an effect. So it was an embracing the voters, embracing the people, and educating everybody, and then affecting the political process by having the elected officials realize that if they want to get elected, they'd better embrace environmentalism, too.

Collings

Now, just going back to this board member, he doesn't want to consider himself an environmentalist, but a conservationist is okay. What's the difference?

Diamond

Well, I'm not so sure there is a difference. But I think for this board member to see himself as a conservationist--

Collings

I'm just using him as an example, of course.

Diamond

Yes. Right. Of course. It's because I believe that some people think of environmentalism as a movement, a political movement, and that some people in the environmental movement are people that may be extreme; that conservation is something that's sort of a conservative--it has to do with being a conservative, which he is. He's a conservative Republican. He wants to protect what's there, and he sees the value of protecting what's there. I think he sees environmentalism as perhaps being more political and getting involved in the

political process, which may be more liberal than he. You know, I think maybe the idea for him, and I'm only guessing--because I like him very much, and I see where he's coming from--is that environmentalism seems liberal and political, whereas conservationism seems conservative and taking care of what is and not changing things, whereas environmentalism seems like more proactive.

Collings

Right. Right. Yes, it's a semantic difference, really.

Diamond

Yes, and it's more comfortable. So, for me, I'm happy that he's comfortable, as long as he's voting the way I'm voting. [Laughter]

Collings

Whether it's conservation as the word or environmentalism.

Diamond

Yes, exactly. The effect is the same.

Collings

I'm sort of intrigued by the bottled water industry and what a big business it is here in Southern California. Does the water board ever sort of take it upon itself to promote the water that it is producing for the Southern California region?

Diamond

Well, we don't actually have anything to do with tap water.

Collings

Oh, I see. Excuse me. Yes.

Diamond

Yes, we protect groundwater and surface water. But there are times when, because, you know, people ask us all the time, "What about the drinking water?" Because we're protecting the aquifers, which are clearly potential drinking water, and our groundwater is potential drinking water. In fact, we regulate a lot of water because it's potential municipal drinking water.

Diamond

When it comes to your home, of course, it's delivered by the Metropolitan Water District and the Department of Water and Power, and so we're not involved with that. But we certainly regulate water that they could potentially be using in the future for water. Of course, we will have to rely on that more and more, because we're not going to get as much water from Northern California. So water quality is important because it's important, but there's also a nexus to water supply, because if we protect our own water quality, that water in the future may be our own drinking water.

Diamond

So, that said, bottled water is not regulated. Frequently people will say, "Well, we're finding there's contamination," and there is contamination in

groundwater. There's no question. There's chromium contamination. There's all kinds of, you know, contamination, and we investigate it and we clean it up. Our drinking water is safe. People want to know that. It's safe because it's regulated. We don't regulate our drinking water, but we know that it's regulated. It's blended. It comes from Northern California, or some of it's from local wells. We do have local wells in our region.

Diamond

The bottled water industry is not regulated, and so it is something that we should be concerned about. Some bottled water you get is fine. I'm not saying that I don't drink bottled water ever. I do, but I don't at home. I drink tap water, because I know that my tap water is regulated; it's blended; and it's safe. It comes to our house safe. I do put a filter underneath, because the water comes to your house safe, but possibly your own pipes might be old. So I put a filter on it just for extra precaution for whatever my own pipes might have from my home--but, you know, you're supposed to take care of your own pipes.

Diamond

But bottled water is not regulated, and also plastic isn't particularly good. You have bottled water that sits there in plastic. If you keep it in your car and the sun is affecting it in any way, you don't know what you're getting.

Collings

Right, right. What about the question of groundwater? Does the water board deal with recharging groundwater--

Diamond

Yes.

Collings

--and those kinds of concerns? Because I know that there has been concern over the years in Los Angeles that there's so much pavement and so much of the rainwater does run off into the sea. I know that Dorothy Green at one point was involved in an organization called Unpave L.A. I'm wondering what the water board thinking on that matter is.

Diamond

Well, absolutely, we live in the most paved region of the state. I talk about regions because we're a regional board, but it's almost like a waterslide--I've heard it described this way--in terms of we have pavement from one end of our region to the other, ending up at the Santa Monica Bay. So when you have heavy rains, which we have sometimes, the rainwater, instead of recharging and going into our--recharging our own groundwater, it's just coming along our impervious pavement all the way through our storm drains out to the sea.

Diamond

We are doing whatever we can to encourage all of our cities to dig up as much of this pavement as possible, and to green it. I'm completely in agreement with

Dorothy Green on unpaving L.A. and unpaving this region, and more and more, that's being done. We're encouraging people to use reconstructed or constructed wetlands; to have green spaces wherever possible. The water board encourages it. We are not allowed to require how the cities and the permittees meet our regulations, but there are lots of efforts going on, in order to meet the regulations, to have more and more green space.

Diamond

We see parks being developed. We see all over the city opportunities to recharge this water and to have cisterns, for example. There are lots of ways to do that. There's porous pavement that's being used throughout the region; more and more of these best management practices. Low-impact development is something that we're seeing talked about a lot in Ventura. All of these things are in order to meet our regulations, but they will improve our groundwater.

Diamond

We need to capture our storm water. When it rains, it basically goes out to the sea, and it takes along with it all of this toxic brew of bacteria and all kinds of pollutants; metals that sit on the street from cars; people washing their cars in their driveways. All of that pollutant goes down our storm drain. But we're going to see less and less of it, because cities know that there are expensive ways of cleaning up, and there are less expensive ways.

Diamond

There are also amenities. We're seeing the City of Los Angeles right now, they're going to be doing some models where they have certain areas of the city have--encourage people in their own homes by giving them grants to take the water that comes off their roof and through their gutters, instead of going out to the sidewalks and into the street, to turn them around and put them into their own gardens. So we're seeing all kinds of practices.

Collings

The cistern projects.

Diamond

Cisterns and just recharging your own gardens and digging up the cement that you have. There are lots of ways that people will be encouraged to do that, in order to decrease their use of water, to make use of the rainwater that we do get. It just makes a lot of sense, and I think that we're seeing it happen. It's a slow process. Regulation is a slow way to see things happen, but it's the only way that we can have. I mean, it's this long process, but once people see the benefit to it, I think they're going to embrace it.

Collings

Yes. Okay, let me ask you another question, about something you said in what you wrote. Just out of curiosity--if I can sort of find my note here--you mentioned that you really felt like the celebrities and the liberal Democratic

community with financial means were like absolutely crucial to pushing environmental policy forward in Southern California. You wrote that a couple of years back, and I was just wondering if you still felt the same way. I mean, here we are in Southern California, and there is a large celebrity presence. Do you still feel the same way, or were you sort of writing that sort of in the wake of the 1988 triumph? You know, it was so important to have the celebrity involvement at that point.

Diamond

You know, it's really interesting, because I would say celebrity is still important. It's interesting, and I say that not because I think that, "Well, if a celebrity says that, then it must be true," or--

Collings

Then it must be wonderful, yes.

Diamond

--that I would change my mind about anything. But my practical political view is that people do listen to celebrities. I mean, I am always stunned by it; I'm surprised by it. But it's just the nature of human beings. People stop and listen. They look. They hear. Now, it doesn't mean that they're positively influenced by every celebrity. Some celebrities in our life give very bad messages, and people can use that to teach their children, you know, whether it's Britney Spears, "Look what's happening to her," and why, and it's an opportunity to teach children about certain values. But I also think that celebrities who are looked up to, like a Clint Eastwood, for example, as a very positive--and I'm sure that polls are done as to which celebrities people listen to.

Diamond

I know environmental organizations, when they go on fundraising ventures and have events, they bill celebrities as, “Come to this event and pay $500 because it's also and so famous person's home," or "So and so famous person is going to be speaking," and they draw a lot of people. Then they put ads on television or public service announcements, and there are celebrities. There are celebrities, and there are celebrities. There are celebrities like in 1988, Jim Garner. Today it would be maybe somebody like Ted Danson, other celebrities who people look up to, who have a very positive ID, like I would say a Clint Eastwood has in some circles. People think, "Oh, he says that."

Diamond

I mean, I look at somebody like Arnold Schwarzenegger. I think many people would agree that in many areas he's doing a very good job as governor. I don't believe that he would have been elected in a recall if he weren't a celebrity, and I think there are many--I mean, and I think that that's just the nature of human beings. If we have a positive feeling about a particular celebrity, people are influenced by them.

Diamond

So I still believe that that's true. Putting my political hat on, if I was doing an initiative on television about a very important environmental issue that was on the ballot, I would put an important celebrity, and I'm trying to think who would I put on today that would be somebody--maybe it would be Brad Pitt. I would say a lot of people would vote for that environmental thing because they think Brad Pitt is a good person, and they like him. Now, that might not be the correct person, but I might put Clint Eastwood out there, because he has a very positive image. So I think people are influenced by celebrity, for good or for bad. In this case, if it's for the environment, I think, "Go for it. Great."

Collings

Well, I know that when Dorothy Green was talking about founding Heal the Bay, she had some help from some people in the film industry, either loaning their house for a fundraiser or what have you. So just overall, do you think that the fact that we are here in Southern California and we do have the Hollywood industry has helped the environmental movement?

Diamond

I think it's helped the environmental movement nationally, because you have celebrities who go--I mean, they're very committed. I mean, I really admire them for doing what they do, people like Pierce Brosnan, for example, you know, James Bond. I mean, he is completely committed to the environment, and I've seen him do many, many events. He'll be on television, and he'll do public service announcements, and I think he'll go to events in other parts of the country. I think that's great.

Diamond

I think people are influenced, and there is a tremendous commitment. They don't do it other than for the reason that they're doing this because they believe in it and they think it's really important. I think that's good use of their celebrity. There are plenty of people who are celebrities who don't do anything with their celebrity for good. So I admire them for doing it, and I think they do make a difference.

Collings

Okay, what about in your own personal life? We've talked about your work as an environmentalist over the years. Have you made any choices in your personal life, do you think, that come out of that thinking?

Diamond

Oh yes, absolutely. I mean, just little choices, and maybe big choices. Well, I'll say from the point of view of being an environmentalist, I think one of the reasons that I knew I didn't want to have more than two children was I was very influenced by the whole concept of an organization called Zero Population Growth. I was adamant. There was really an impact on me that perhaps we

shouldn't have more than two children, and that was one of the reasons I chose not to have--it wasn't the only reason, but it certainly had a big impact on me. I mean, I think it's almost so much a part of my life that it would be hard for me to almost decide what was it that I did and didn't do because of environmentalism.

Diamond

We certainly chose to live where we lived because of air pollution. I mean, we definitely knew that we weren't--when we bought our first house in 1968, many people we knew that we were friends with decided to move to the San Fernando Valley because they could get a bigger home. That's in the days when houses were about $50,000 in Southern California. People went to the valley, and for between 40[000] and $50,000, they could get a really nice, big house. We decided we couldn't move to the valley because of air pollution, so we would get a very small, old house in Pacific Palisades, because we wanted to live where the air was clean.

Diamond

Just, I guess, I would say that we have hybrid cars, and I try to buy my food based on things that are grown locally. I really look and make sure that when I buy produce, I either buy it at the farmers market. I don't buy things that are being imported from far away because I'm concerned about global climate change, and I realize that if you're flying something in, that's an awful lot you're paying to get an apple from Chile in the middle of the summer, when I could be getting fruit from the local farmers.

Diamond

Even in my own home, I guess because of the water board, I became very, very conscious how much water I was using in my garden. We bought this old house with all this grass, and, you know, I started thinking, "What am I going to do? I've got this driveway that's all concrete, and I see the water going out into the street, and it's going to end up going into a storm drain," and it's like, "Oh, my, this is driving me nuts." So I really researched what I could do, about six years ago or five years ago, to keep the water from our own home getting into the street, because I felt like such a hypocrite, dealing with storm water problems and participating in creating some of it.

Diamond

So I found--I realized that, with talking to various people, that what I could do, the best way I could do that, was to dig up my concrete driveway and line it with gravel, and then put in a series of French drains, and then put concrete back on top of that, so that none of the water could go out to the street. The reason I didn't just put in green space was that we also use the driveway for our children and grandchildren, rather, to play basketball. So I needed to continue

to have a basketball court, but not have the water go down, so we figured out a way of doing that without having the water drain into the street.

Diamond

So there are just, you know, lots of big and little ways that I think about it all. I think it's sort of like integrated into much of the decision making or choices.

Collings

Yes. Do you find yourself being sort of like the environmental cop with your friends and family, constantly raising this or that issue? Or do you just sort of let it go?

Diamond

To some extent. No, I do. I do. My friends, of course, know what I do, and so I think I've had a little bit of impact. I'm not very preachy with my friends, because, you know, I sort of don't like to be that way. I mean, I might mention little things here and there. But I've found that with my children and grandchildren, it's sort of been just part of who they are. I mean, we've brought them up to be very aware of the environment. I mean, from the moment my children, who are now forty and thirty-nine, or forty-one and thirty-nine, were little--I mean very little--their first contact with life was knowing that their parents were involved in fighting oil drilling. I mean, it was like from the time they were infants. So it was always just a part of their life. Environmentalism was always a part of their life.

Diamond

So I think our grandchildren have been brought up that way, too. I hear my children talking to my grandchildren, and it's always like, "We can't turn the water on." My three-and-a-half-year-old grandson was here the other day, brushing his teeth, and he said, "I have to turn the water off, because it's not good to have water going when you're brushing your teeth."

Diamond

I thought, "Wow." You know, it's great. So I'm not worried about my kids and my grandchildren. They kind of grew up with it, so it's not even an issue.

Collings

Is there anything we haven't discussed?

Diamond

I just think the thing that I think is probably the most important that I see happening in the world of the environment, not just water quality but just in general, is that people are really seeing that it's not only impacting them but future generations. I think that my biggest concern is that we continue to educate. I think that children really are the key, and that they are educated in school now, but you never can assume that the fight is over. It's almost like in some ways I think of the environmental movement taking lessons from the women's movement, in that the fight, the education of women as to what the

fight was, the struggle continues, because people take for granted the rights that they have. So we sometimes lose sight of the fact that you never can lose sight of the fact that there always will be a struggle.

Diamond

With environmentalism, I think that you continue to educate children, and so therefore I think that the struggle continues, because they've been taught that it is a struggle to protect and to conserve, and I don't think that environmentalism is ever taken for granted.

Collings

Yes. Well, I think one of the ironies is that, you know, precisely as the environmental movement has become a more significant force, on the other hand, you have almost like sort of the rise of the trash, plastic, disposable empire. I mean, all of the toys and other kinds of products that are available today, you know, really weren't available the way they are, twenty thirty years ago. So on the one hand, the kids are being educated, but on the other hand, they're being inundated with all of these products, you know, the toys with the McDonald's meals.

Diamond

Some of that is changing, too, in that I know that some cities are already beginning to ban plastic. Some markets don't offer--I think San Francisco recently just banned even the offering of plastic. In the city of Los Angeles there's all kinds of interesting things going on in terms of plastic, because we know that the worst threat to aquatic life, which we haven't even talked about, which is also one of the mandates of the water board, is plastics in the water. So I think the message is that we have had an effect on protecting the environment, but that there is more to protect, and that future generations have other battles on their hand, and some of this is the plastics and packaging.

Diamond

So the battle never ends. So I guess we're leaving more work to be done. Our legacy is not only have we taken care--or are we in the process of taking care of some of the more primary environmental battles, which are for public health, the air, and water. Not that it's over, but at least we're aware of it. We're working on it. We're getting better.

Collings

Yes. I mean, it's on the agenda as a legitimate issue, whereas earlier on you had to struggle to get it there.

Diamond

Right. But there's no question that the legacy for future generations is that it will never be over. There's always going to be more environmental battles. The struggle never ends, but the issues that you're fighting over may be different.

Collings

Right.[End of interview]

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