

CARTON 9:22 THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

JONES, CYNTHIA
OWYANG, STEVEN

ORAL HISTORY
TRANSCRIPT

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Cynthia Jones/Steven Owyang, FEPC, 6/28/02

I: This is Robert Allen. Today is June 28th, and I'm interviewing - I'm at the Fair Employment and Housing Commission interviewing Steven Owyang and Cynthia Jones, and we're going to be talking about C. L. Dellums. So I wanted to - maybe each of you could speak to the question of how you met C. L. What was it like working with him? What was your experience of him?

C: Well, when I came here, C. L. was serving as a commissioner.

I: This is Cynthia speaking.

S: It was '78, right?

C: Right. '79.

I: '79?

C: Yeah, so my main experience with C. L. was I was his driver like when he got to go out of town. [Laughs] When he went out of town for Commission meetings. I guess he got a little too old to drive, and plus he would have to get a car and so I would go to Oakland and pick him up and take him to the airport and pick him up when he comes back. But on these rides I'd get these history lessons [laughs]. He would talk about almost anything. And one time I actually had to go with him to the Commission meeting in L.A. Well, I didn't know where I was going, so [laughs] he had to drive to the hotel for - because I didn't know where I was going. And he said he's drive me. Plus after that, that was the last time he drove [laughs] because, you know, he had a little trouble driving. But he would always tell me about how, when he came from Texas, he said

he came around 1920, I think it was, and he always said that, "I had to leave them. They were gonna kill me, or I was gonna kill somebody," you know, 'cause it was so - it was so racist there. So I thought it was so funny because he, you know, he was feisty, but I [inaudible] an old man, he must have been an old whipper-snapper when he was young [laughs] because, you know, back in those days it had to be like that, like really dangerous. He realized it too and got out and came out to California. And he'd always talk about A. Phillip Randolph and his experiences with him. I can't remember a lot of specifics, but I always remember him talking about him and the Pullman porters and the railroads and [inaudible] and around and he'd talk about his family and things. I really enjoyed driving him because I enjoyed listening to him. He was like, you know, a living history book.

I: So he was obviously a person who liked to talk.

C: Yes. [Laughs]

S: And was very good at it.

I: And very good at it.

C: Yeah, he was.

S: His oratory was just amazing.

I: Yes. Did you ever hear him give a public speech, either of you?

S: I heard him speak at a lot of Commission meetings, so it wasn't exactly prepared text, but he didn't really need that because just at the drop of a pin he could get up and talk about anything he wanted to talk about, and it would be done in, you know, a style that

you just don't hear anymore. I mean he was really kind of an orator in the old tradition. You know, a very measured cadence and if he - he had this - I don't know what that accent was, but it sounded very patrician almost. Well, you've heard some of his tapes.

I: Yes, I . . .

S: And I don't know exactly what that accent is. But people don't talk like that anymore. Maybe I should say when I met him. I started at the Commission also in '79, a few months after Cynthia did. And I came here as a young attorney. I was young back then in '79. And, you know, C. L. had already been on the Commission for 20 years, so I really met him sort of at the tail end of his service on the Commission, because I think he was on from '97 till '85. That's when [inaudible], and I just - I guess the thing that struck me was, you know, all of a sudden here I am, this young guy, who wants to do civil rights law meeting really one of the greats, one of the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, especially here in California. And the thing that I remember C. L. talking about all the time was the big effort after World War II to get various states to pass fair employment laws. And I guess there was sort of a strategic or tactical decision made to try to push it in five states to begin with. I think it was Illinois, New York, maybe Michigan, maybe one other northern industrial state in California. And California was literally the last state to pass that. It wasn't till 1959. And C. L. always said, you know, despite everything you hear about California being diverse and open and all that, it actually is quite a racist state, especially in those days, and it really was a huge fight to get the law

passed here. And I remember there was some Commission meeting at which C. L. sort of announced that California's the most racist state outside of the Confederacy or something [laughs], some outrageous statement like that, that really catches people's attention. And he was capable of doing, making statements like that. And, you know, when C. L. spoke, people listened. That's all there is to it. You know, as a lawyer, I guess I was always concerned, you know, what's legal here, and what does the law require under the FEPC. C. L. was really the civil rights activist. He wasn't so much looking at little legal details, but the big picture all the time, you know, what's right and what's just. And that's what I remember about working with him. And I got to work with him in the closed sessions too, when the Commission's actually deciding cases. And C. L.'s approach was always, you know, the law is here to serve justice; it's not the other way around. We're not here to do little legal niceties kind of thing. So that really was C. L.'s approach to how he did things.

I: Mm hmm. Now, he worked with other commissioners, and the commissioners met together to look at cases.

S: Yes.

I: What was his relationship with the other commissioners like, and what were those meetings like? Were they . . .

S: I would say for the most part he was looked upon as really, you know, he was the founding father of the Commission. They gave him a lot of deference. He certainly could get into spirited debates and arguments with some of the commissioners, especially those

who were more conservative than he was, and I noticed that happened from time to time. But for the most part I think they just - they looked upon him really as a living legend. And, you know, he really had served longer than any other commissioner. I don't think anyone really came close to the almost 25 years that he served. So he had a lot of institutional memory, not only of the Commission, but everything that led to the creation of the Commission, you know, the Civil Rights Movement, [inaudible] the March on Washington and all that, so he really had all that. And, as I think I mentioned to you over the phone, and I know Cynthia will agree, C. L. just had this memory that he could remember stuff that happened in 1925 like it happened yesterday. And he would start in on a story, and he would remember all these details. Just - he had an amazing knack for doing that.

C: And he was a man in his 80's . . .

S: Yeah.

C: . . . and he was totally alert, and his mind is sharp, you know, as any young person. It was great. [inaudible] and he'd like totally alert. And, you know, you see a lot of people [inaudible] C. L. You could talk to him without ever seeing him and knowing his age, you would never guess.

I: Never guess his age, huh?

C: Never guess his age.

S: Right.

I: He had a sense of humor too.

S: He definitely had a sense of humor. There was always a twinkle in his eye. He flirted outrageously [C laughs] with women. There was no question about that. [All laugh] I just saw him carrying on with other staff and stuff, you know. A lot of stuff that a lot of women wouldn't put up with, with C. L. it was just fun [all laugh]. But he was an outrageous flirt.

I: He would have been in trouble if we'd had the sexual harassment law.

S: I never saw him do anything physical, but he liked the ladies. He liked the ladies.

I: Did he have any relationship with any of the governors? Did any of the governors have any contact with the [inaudible]?

S: You know, earlier on, when the Commission was first set up, there was a direct relationship with Pat Brown. But that, of course, was before my time. Let's see. Who was Governor when I came? I guess it was Jerry Brown. And I think there was less of a personal relationship.

I: And then Reagan [inaudible].

S: Reagan reappointed him, but I don't know of any direct relationship between Reagan or the subsequent governor. Who was after Reagan? No, it was Reagan and then Jerry Brown. Yeah.

I: And Deukmejian.

S: Deukmejian was the guy that didn't reappoint him.

I: That did not.

S: Did not reappoint him.

I: What year was that?

S: That would have been '85 or '6.

I: So that was his last year on the . . .

S: Yeah.

I: That's when the term ended.

S: Right.

I: He was Chairman of the Commission for how many years?

When did he first . . .

S: I don't even know if . . .

C: He wasn't Chair of the Commission all that time.

I: No. No, he . . .

C: John Martin was Chair most of the time . . .

S: Right.

C: . . . from the time we came.

S: Right. So C. L. was never Chair when I worked here. Or when Cynthia worked here. And I just don't remember, or I don't know that he was Chair before then. I know he was on the Commission at that time.

C: I know he was Chair some time in the past. It's just I remember reading some old like meetings, minutes or something. Maybe, I think. Because they acted as - they actually - well, way before us, but commissioners would actually investigate the cases.

S: Right.

C: They didn't have like the department that investigates. So, you know, back then there remains a lot of stuff from way back, before we came, before '79. And they set up the system within the

department. So he's on a lot of papers there 'cause they did the actual investigating, actually investigated the cases.

I: Right. Well, I can get the dates later for when he was the Chair. Were there particular cases that he seemed really keen on, really interested in? Do you remember any outstanding and notable cases that he really . . .

S: He had, of course, a particular interest in race cases, but he participated in all of them. We didn't get a whole lot of race cases. We still don't. It's interesting. We get many more sex cases, disability, things like that. And my theory has always been that really good sex cases, I mean race cases, would just settle out or they go into [inaudible]. You don't get a lot of those cases. But when we had those cases - and also I, I do remember one case, I don't remember the name of it, that involved a union worker. He was very sort of protective of the whole collective bargaining system and very much aware of the plight of people who needed to be in unions. I remember that about C. L.

I: OK. The cases, when they were heard, [inaudible] reconciled the - obviously there are the documents, the claims and so on. And are there records of the deliberations?

S: The deliberations are all confidential, but so the records that would still be around are the decisions themselves. And from that you can't really see what happened in closed session. You'll just see a number of names on the signature lines. And C. L.'s appears on many of those. But you won't be able to tell from that exactly what C. L. said in the closed sessions. That's all sort of . . .

I: In general, how would you describe the way he operated in those sessions?

S: I would say C. L. really felt like there was a need for the FEHA, and his thought was, you know, he would find the violation sooner than other commissioners would. Let's put it that way. Because I think his whole mindset was there was a need for the law, and there continued to be a need for the law, and people were still getting discriminated against. So he was very much pro-employee, pro-plaintiff, if you will. That certainly came through in his notes and in his discussions with the other commissioners. When the commission was dominated by people more conservative than he, then that would set up some interesting debates.

I: [inaudible] yeah. When you say that the commissioners investigated the cases themselves, what does that mean? Does that mean . . .

C: When there was a complaint of discrimination, they would actually go out and investigate and find out if there was any cause, you know, to take it any further.

I: So they would go out to the work site?

S: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

S: And interview . . .

I: And interview people . . .

S: Now, this was the old system. That was the system that . . .

C: The very old system.

S: . . . that was in place from about '59 to about '77 or '78, before Cynthia and I arrived here. By the time we got here, it was a more sophisticated, larger system, where they set up what used to be called the Division of Fair Employment Practices and now called the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

I: In Sacramento.

S: Yeah, in Sacramento, that actually received and investigated the complaints. So at that point the commissioners were no longer involved in the actual sort of on-site investigation and preparation of the case. Instead they became a much more sort of quasi-judicial body, more like a court type of body that actually issued the decisions, very much like judges do. And so that's the system that was in place when Cynthia and I got here. That's essentially the system that's still in place today.

I: So that would be a separate investigative body with professional investigators.

S: Right. State - full-time State employees who'd go and - go off and investigate cases, and then they got lawyers to present the cases in front of our staff here. Our - the Commission is very small. We've just got a very small staff of administrative law judges. So we go out and hear the cases and write the decisions, and then the Commission rules on them [inaudible] decisions.

I: Did C. L. ever voice any thoughts about the Commission itself in terms of things he would like to have seen done, changed, other ways of working, anything like that?

S: One thing I recall was that, you know, getting the law passed in the first place was a huge accomplishment that came at much cost. He always felt that it was a compromise, the way the Commission was set up, because when it was first established in 1959, it was tiny. I mean literally, I think, just five commissioners in the beginning who were serving essentially as volunteers, part-time volunteers, and a very small staff. And he always felt that, given the population of California and the prevalence of discrimination, that it really was never set up, staffed, or funded in a way to make it very effective. It really didn't start growing until the late '70s under Jerry Brown's administration, when it finally started growing into something approaching what other administrative agencies are. But even today, you know, the DFEH and the commission [inaudible] are quite small in terms of the caseload and especially when you compare our jurisdiction with what federal agencies with similar jurisdictions [inaudible]. I mean we're just way smaller than federal agencies are. You know, look at Department of Industrial Relations or the Workers Comp board or [inaudible] ED and [inaudible] development, it's still only maybe a middle size state bureaucracy that [inaudible] gets, you know, 20 thousand cases a year.

I: 20 thousand a year?

S: Now at that time, back in C. L.'s day, it was probably more like 8 to 10 thousand cases a year, but the agency was way smaller. I know C. L. on several occasions told me, you know, there was a compromise because they needed to get the law in place, but it was never sort of staffed up in a way to make it very [inaudible].

I: What's the relationship between the Commission and like the EEOC?

S: There's a lot of overlapping jurisdiction, and there's what they call - basically a contract between the DFEH, our sister agency up in Sacramento, and the EEOC.

I: That's the Department of?

S: Fair Employment and Housing.

I: Fair Employment and Housing.

S: They actually get funding from EEOC to investigate cases where there's overlapping jurisdiction.

I: The Department does.

S: The Department does. We don't, but the Department does. And I think that already existed by the time - well, at the time C. L. was on. Our jurisdiction is actually broader than the EEOC's, in that we cover smaller employers, you know, [inaudible] you need to employ five people to be under our jurisdiction, whereas with the Feds is [inaudible]teen. We also cover more bases of discrimination. The Feds have race, sex, national origin, color and religion, age, disability. We have all of those plus sexual orientation, marital status, [inaudible] others, so the kinds of discrimination that we cover is broader [inaudible]. But they're pretty much parallel systems.

I: OK. How was he regarded among staff folks and people who work with them as their - you were with the - your position is or was . . .

C: I was [inaudible].

I: OK, and so there were several - were you it, or were there others as well?

C: There were a couple others. But we - I looked at - he was just like the grandfather of the [laughs] . . .

S: Yeah. He was like a father or grandfather . . .

C: . . . of the agency. He's like the grandfather, you know? Anything for C. L. It's like if he want it, he gets it.

I: He was well liked.

C: Oh, yes. He was well liked. He'd treat everyone with respect and he was always a very kind person. I loved him.

I: Mm hmm.

S: I think that goes across the board, and all the staff not only liked him, they really loved the guy. He could be crotchety at times.

C: Yes [laughs].

S: You know, not everyone has the ability or the opportunity to work literally with a legend.

I: Oh, yes.

S: And he was a legend.

I: He was a legend, yes.

S: And a lot of us, you know, you could be a bureaucrat here, and in some ways we are, but this was the real thing. This was a real guy from the hardest part of the Civil Rights [inaudible], and there we were, working for him. And I remember one other thing. You know, he - when I worked [inaudible] one day we were sitting - not in this building, but over there. And C. L. had come in with some issue, and I remember talking with him, and the building started

shaking. It was an earthquake. So I just dove under the desk, and I said, "C. L., get under here. Get under here." And C. L. says, "I've lived long enough, and if it's my time, it's my time. Now get out from under that desk." [All laugh] So I came [inaudible] real sheepish. [inaudible]

I: I'll bet.

S: It was just one of those funny things that happened with C. L. You know, there I was under there, you know, just shaking, you know? [Laughs] C. L. couldn't care less [inaudible].

I: What was his daily routine like? Did he come in every day? Several days a week?

S: Not often at all. He would come in for meetings. You know, we often met in San Francisco, sometimes in Oakland, but also throughout the state. But really the - we don't see the commissioners all that often because it's not a full-time job for them. They really are kinda volunteers. They don't get paid much for being commissioners. So C. L. was mainly at home. He was mainly at home.

C: He did have things he did with his friends because he would talk about, you know, he's going out with someone. He'd go out with them. And so he had a social life.

S: Right.

I: Mm hmm.

C: But he wasn't in the office much.

I: Yeah. So he came in mainly for meetings.

S: Meetings.

I: But he must have done outside work too because if he was investigating cases and doing anything like that, he did that . . .

S: That would have been in the early years . . .

C: That was before . . .

S: That would be up till the mid-'70s.

I: OK. But he would have done that on his own time?

S: You know, I don't - they would have paid him for that, but it was - even at that time it wasn't a full-time job. So that would have been from '59 till about '77, I would guess, and that just was before Cynthia and I got here. I'm sure they paid him something to go out and investigate things. So, like I said, you know, we sort of worked with C. L. in sort of the waning years of his tenure on the Commission. That would have been from '79 to '85.

I: What did he feel were his main accomplishments? I mean with regard to the Commission, but also maybe he talked about other things too, [inaudible] he probably talked fairly broadly.

S: I think the Commission was really one of his main accomplishments, the fact that he'd gotten the law passed. But I think it was sort of second because I think his fondest memories, maybe his strongest memories, were just the labor movement, working with the Pullman porters and organizing a black labor union at the time he did it. I mean what an incredible accomplishment, to do that at that time and in that climate, you know, both the labor climate and racial climate. So a lot of his war stories were about that and what was going on in the '30s and the '40s. So I think

probably that would have been number one, and the Commission thing would have been number two.

I: OK. And we speak of him as a legend. How was he regarded in the political arena? I mean here at the city level and at the state level? I know he probably had a lot of enemies because he was so forthright and was such a strong advocate for labor and civil rights. But how would you describe the perception of him in the general political community?

S: Well, again, this is working with him in his later years. I think he was well respected. I didn't really think of him as having a lot of enemies. I think maybe people who had fought with him before had maybe mellowed because by this time those enemies also would have been up in years. I think he was just viewed as this guy who had been literally through the Civil Rights wars and the labor wars, someone who had achieved elder statesman status, you know, because, again, we worked with him when he was well advanced in his years, and a lot of his battles had been over for, literally for decades. So I didn't think of him as having a lot of enemies. Probably a lot of people disagreed with his politics, but not in a personal vein.

I: Did he ever talk about what he felt were his disappointments, when you look back over his career? Anything he wish he could have accomplished or that - campaigns that didn't work? Any of that sort of [inaudible] . . .

S: I guess - certainly on the Commission thing, he recognized that there was a compromise made to get the FEHA or the FEPA as it

was called [inaudible], there was a huge compromise made there, that in order to get the law they had to sort of settle for a very small enforcement agency. But I think it was just considered something that they had to do tactically, but they just needed the law on the books, and maybe later on the agency would be [inaudible] and it took 20 more years for the agency to really start to grow. And so I think that was a little bit of a disappointment. The other impression I have, and this isn't based on any direct thing that I remember, is I think C. L. maybe would have pushed more radical action in the time of the March on Washington. I don't know why I think that, but I - you know, because the March on Washington was used as a lever by then. It was sort of called off at the last minute. And I don't know. I kind of get the feeling that C. L. might have been out there marching [inaudible] if A. Phillip Randolph hadn't [inaudible].

I: [inaudible] that march, yeah.

S: [inaudible] hadn't [inaudible]. You know, I don't know why I say that, but I - that's just my impression of C. L. [laughs].

I: Well, with the passage of the civil rights legislation in the '60s, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, did he ever make any comment about how did he feel that - well, I'm sure he was pleased that those were passed. But was he able to talk much about that? And what those laws meant? And how did he feel that these made less need for the Commission, or were they a continuation of what the Commission was trying to do?

S: I think he saw them as a continuation because, as I understand the strategy, it really was after World War II to get the

states to start passing these laws, and eventually there would be enough momentum that [inaudible] could pass it on a federal level. And that's actually largely what happened.

I: That's what happened, right.

S: And I think it's that old idea of, you know, the states are kind of a laboratory, right? So various states pass something, and if it seems to be working at the various states, then maybe it'll work on the national level.

I: Yeah. Now, why did they - that strategy was pursued because - I know they were talking about it [inaudible], the idea of a permanent FEPC back then too, and that's because the commission appointed by Roosevelt was just a temporary . . .

S: Yeah, sort of a war-time thing.

I: A war-time thing. And they didn't think it could be passed at the federal level?

S: I think so. I think that - the thought was, you know, given the composition of Congress at that time, that it just wasn't going to be - it wasn't going to happen any time soon. So I do think they basically targeted northern states, northern, populous, industrial states, where they thought they would have the best chance of getting these laws through, and they did have some success in the late '40s and early '50s passing those laws, and California finally came along in '59. So I do think that that was the idea, to get these things up and running in the states and then eventually there would be enough momentum [inaudible].

I: To do something at the federal level?

S: To do something at the federal level. Of course, the other thing going on was, you know, the Civil Rights Movement in the South was [inaudible] so eventually all that, I think, finally gave it enough impetus to get the law passed in '64.

I: And he must have been very pleased by that, although he doesn't strike me as a - he was not a street activist in the sense that the Civil Rights Movement that required tens of thousands of people out in demonstrations.

S: Right.

I: He was not - was he very much involved in demonstrations, or was his work mainly behind the scenes?

S: You know, I don't know whether he was out in the street. I think he learned his politics in the labor movement, and so it's sort of halfway in between doing stuff out in the streets and doing stuff in smoke-filled rooms. I think he probably was comfortable in both. But I think he learned his tactics in the labor movement.

I: That's true, yeah. Well, he had tremendous energy.

S: Yeah, endless energy.

I: I mean I just read this correspondence, and he - and his love for talking also carries over into the letters.

S: Right.

I: Because his letters are stories, and he doesn't write just a plain business letter. He gives all the background and details. And they're wonderful. So it's a great thing to read. But, on the other hand, it makes me think about - I guess it was all women who had to deal with his dictation. [All laugh] Because he clearly was - he'd go

on and on and on. You look at letters that are about ten pages, single spaced. [S laughs] What was that all - do you have any of his correspondence?

C: No because his - you know, everything he did here is the, become through the [inaudible]. I don't remember doing any correspondence for him.

S: Anything long like that [all laugh].

I: Well, he could go on and on. But it makes the letters really rich then when you're reading them.

S: Right. You can tell [inaudible] . . .

I: [inaudible] language.

S: I don't think he had much formal education, but, boy, that guy could talk, and he could write.

I: Right. That certain comes across. That tape of the interview [inaudible] is just amazing. He had such presence and command of the language and then the memory. Memory for detail. Could you say he had a photographic memory, or just a very good memory?

S: [inaudible] He just remembered details.

C: He remembers everything. I don't [inaudible] he remembered details so well. It's mind-blowing. At his age it's . . .

I: He had a clear mind all the way through.

S: Very, very [inaudible].

I: [inaudible] Now, the term of the commissioners was . . .

S: Was four years [inaudible].

I: And he served basically the whole life of the Commission [inaudible] he retired, and . . .

S: Well, actually he was not reappointed by Deukmejian. I think he still wanted to be on the Commission.

I: Right.

S: I think Deukmejian just didn't reappoint him.

I: So he served for a period as the chair. What was the term of the chair?

S: It's really at the pleasure of the governor, so there isn't a set term for the chair. The governor just designates one of the commissioners as the chairperson.

I: And who designated him as the chair of the Commission?

S: I don't have a recollection of him being chair. I know he wasn't chair when I was here. But he may have been during like earlier, maybe during Pat Brown's era or . . .

I: Well, that would be interesting to find out. Maybe it's in the official records.

S: I probably can dig that up.

I: OK.

S: Because I'm thinking . . .

END SIDE A, BEGIN SIDE B

S: So [inaudible] he was the chair.

I: OK, we're continuing now on Side 2. C. L. Dellums on the FEPC. So you think it's possible he was actually not chair, although people thought of him as chair.

S: Well, I mean he certainly had the stature on the Commission, but I just don't - I know he wasn't chair when I worked here.

C: We'll have to see how far the records go back.

S: Yeah, we'll have to check around [inaudible].

I: OK, I would be interested in that.

S: But I'm just thinking who was governor because it was Pat Brown who first appointed him, and I know for the original Commission he wasn't chair. That much I know. In fact, I have an old - the first anniversary report of the FEPC [inaudible] get that.

I: Oh, I'd love to see that.

S: I'll grab that right now, and I know he wasn't chair then. So it would have had to be toward the end of . . .

I: Yeah, it would have been later, for sure. [inaudible]

S: [inaudible]

I: Yeah. Well, it was the Republicans, as I understand, who got Reagan to reappoint him.

S: Yeah, and . . .

I: They didn't know him from anything . . .

C: Right.

I: But it was the Republican leadership that said, "You reappoint him."

C: Exactly. I mean just like out of respect, you know, for . . .

S: And he did. And Reagan [inaudible].

I: He did, yeah. [inaudible]

C: When we got to Deukmejian, he's the first one that didn't, wouldn't . . .

S: Yeah, wouldn't. And I remember with Deukmejian, some of Deukmejian's own appointments, like Lois Graham, a woman whose picture is back there, she - she wanted him reappointed and for whatever reason Deukmejian did not reappoint him. And I think that hurt C. L. deeply.

I: Oh, [inaudible]. Right. Now, Lois Graham was the chairperson of the Commission.

S: She was a commissioner. She was not chair.

I: OK, she was not chair.

S: But she had been appointed by Deukmejian.

I: And you have a photo [inaudible] - you have a photograph of C. L. with her.

S: With her, yes.

I: Right, as well as a lovely photograph of C. L. with your . . .

S: My kid. My son, David. [Laughs]

I: Those are lovely photos, yes.

S: Lois just retired up in Sacramento. So she's still around if you want to talk to her.

I: OK. Actually - so it's Lois Graham, is a person to talk with, former commissioner. And the other person is Jack Martin?

C: John Martin.

S: John Martin.

I: John Martin. John Martin. Also a former [inaudible].

S: This is the latest contact information I have for John.

C: He was serving as the chair, right?

S: John was chair, yeah.

C: When C. L. was the [inaudible].

I: OK, so this is John Martin, here at 822 Masonic Avenue, Albany. 510-525-7848. So he served - in what period? That would be the earlier period.

S: He was appointed by Jerry Brown, probably in the late '70s. So I did work with him. So that would have been roughly in the period '76 till maybe '82 or '83. '83 maybe.

I: '83?

S: Yeah. So late '70s, early '80s.

I: Right. What was - he had a special relationship with C. L.? How would you describe their relationship?

S: Very close.

I: Very close?

S: John is a social worker. He worked at Stiles Hall in Berkeley. In fact, that may be another way to track him down. I think the folks at Stiles Hall might be able to tell you where he is now.

I: OK.

C: He retired from there.

S: Right. I think they had a good relationship, and I think John certainly also considered C. L. the elder statesman of the Commission. That's exactly what C. L. was.

I: Are there any other particular things that stand out about C. L. the man or C. L. the political figure as you think back on - notable things that he said or did or . . .

S: I already told you about that statement about California being the most racist state outside [inaudible]. That one stands out, since it was made at a public meeting [laughter].

I: And he said it was the most racist state outside of the Confederacy?

S: Yeah. [Laughter]

I: I love that. [Laughs]

S: And he did it in his classic way of saying it. And, you know, as staff you're thinking, oh my God, what did you say?

I: And it was a public - but you mean . . .

S: It was at a Commission meeting, I think.

I: Commission meeting.

S: I think it was a Commission meeting down in San Diego or somewhere in southern California. And, you know, as bureaucrats and lawyers, you just go, "Oh, God, what did he say? Is he gonna be quoted in the . . . "

I: Quoted [laughs].

S: I remember C. L. as the kind of guy, he made big statements. When he talked about stuff, it was the big picture, the big issues he was talking about. I mean this was not the little legal niceties that he was talking about. And I just remember - that's what I remember about C. L., that he really was - you know, he sorta was this guy from "the movement," and what the movement

achieved was the creation of, you know, a more important piece of law and a pretty important state agency. But that really - to me that really wasn't his natural - his natural role was in the movement, in the struggle.

I: Well, it's just amazing. Again, when you look at the correspondence, the people he knew. It's like he knew everybody.

S: Yeah. Yeah.

I: And so he would write these - he was a one-man letter-writing campaign. When he was working to get the law passed in the '50s, he would - he could write a letter to anybody and expect to get a reply.

S: Right.

I: And all the way up to the level of the governor. And he would also write to - the way he sort of coordinated different organizations towards getting this done. Of course, he worked with the NAACP as well. And through the NAACP he would organize people in the chapters of the NAACP around the state to get them to go talk to their local assembly person or senator about getting the FEPC passed. So he had - it's like he wore many hats. There was the Brotherhood, the union . . .

S: [inaudible] the labor [inaudible].

I: . . . which is his home base, made his salary. But he also had the NAACP, the Commission for the FEPC, a whole host of organizations that he [laughs], that he seemed to coordinate to get a particular task done.

S: Right.

I: And it's a very interesting, a really amazing way of working, because he was networking. He was networking. He was calling on resources here and there by using these different organizational forums to get things done. And that was a unique way of working.

S: I get the impression, too, that California was a much smaller place at that time.

I: [Laughs] Right. Well, I think those were the main questions I wanted to pose.

S: OK.

I: Yeah, [inaudible] one more question here. His philosophy on handling cases. And I guess that we've talked about that. Is there anything else you would add about the - yourselves, having worked with the Commission now for a number of years, how do you feel about it? In terms of its place in the struggle for fairness and justice and prospects for the future? How do you feel about the agency?

S: I'll let you take that one first [laughs].

C: Well, it's - the agency is working on - I think it's making good progress. You know, recent laws and, you know, with the family care leave and different things. As long as we continue to do better, you know, and improve the laws, you know, but I don't know. I don't feel that people really - I don't think people in the state don't look to us though. You'd think they would look to us for, you know, be taking the lead in civil rights, but I don't feel that that's the - I don't feel that outside the people feel that way in general. I don't think we're known enough. I think we need to get -

I don't know - we just need to get it out there, because a lot of people don't even know who we are, and - and knowledge. I think we need to be - I don't know - it's almost like we need to advertise.

I: But your caseload has been increasing over the years.

C: Yeah, but probably doing, you know, I don't know. We're so small though, you know, it's only so much you can do. But I think we need to have some kind of outreach or something where people will know more about us and know about our agencies, you know, what they can do for you, because a lot of people out there don't even know there's remedies to their problems without them having to go hire an attorney and spend a lot of money that they don't have.

S: Well, my feeling is it's kind of ironic because I think - I agree with a lot of stuff Cynthia said. We're not well known, and I think just civil rights and race relations just aren't sort of a real current cutting edge issues that they were back in the '60s and '70s. At the same time, the law that we enforce now is way, way stronger than it was back in '59 or '60 or '70 or '80, because not only in terms of the original purposes of the law in terms of race relations and maybe sex discrimination, but our law is very strong in the area of family leave, of sexual harassment, disability rights, the housing areas. It's just way, way stronger now. But I do think what has happened is a lot of the energy of the Civil Rights Movement was sort of institutionalized in these laws, and it just doesn't have sort of that same impact that civil rights stuff had in the '60s, you know, at the time when I was - I was in college in the '60s, but [inaudible] late

'60s. [Laughter] But it just doesn't have that immediate, you know, sort of front page quality that it used to have. But at the same time, the law itself is way stronger now. I know that we have changed the look and feel of the California workplace. I mean all these laws are just there now, and, you know, the work force definitely is more integrated now than it was back then. And there's just many more protections for workers.

I: When you say the law, you mean the whole body of law.

S: The whole body of law and ours specifically. The FE - what is now known as the Fair Employment and Housing Act is very - it's one of the strongest civil rights laws in the country. There's no question about that. It's just - it's way more powerful now than the first law that was passed in '59.

I: I should get a look - get a copy of that. At least, yeah, to compare the original law with what it looks like now. It would be very important [inaudible].

S: I'll get that to you.

I: OK. OK, well, thank you very much. I really do appreciate it.

S: I did find a couple of things. And maybe I'll make copies of this for you. You actually can see Lois Graham here.

I: OK. I'm going to turn off the recorder now. End of interview.